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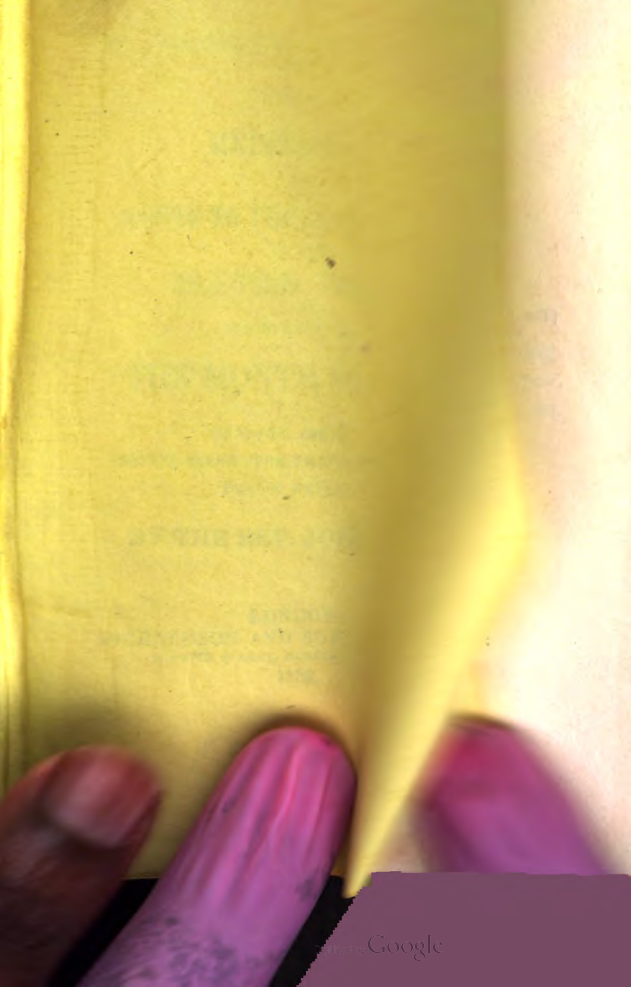
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DEVOUT EXERCISES:
COMPRISING
MEDITATIONS
AND
VISITS TO THE SANCTUARIES
OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN,
FOR EVERY DAY IN
THE MONTH OF MAY;
TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
PRAYERS TAKEN FROM THE SAINTS AND OTHER
DEVOUT WRITERS.
BY THE REV. JOHN WYSE.

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APPROBATION
OF THE
BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM.

Dear Mr. Wyse,

Your Book of Meditations having been examined at my request by a competent ecclesiastic, I have much pleasure in authorizing its publication.

Your devoted servant,

✠ W. B. ULLATHORNE.

Birmingham, Oct. 1st, 1857.

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MEDITATIONS,
VISITS TO THE SANCTUARIES,
AND
PRAYERS.

First Day.
ON THE DEVOTION OF THE
MONTH OF MARY.

MEDITATION.

EVERY Catholic knows something about the devotion peculiar to the month of May. Hence it seems almost needless to observe, that its chief purport is to offer a public homage to Mary, the Mother of God, in common with the whole Catholic Church, by affectionately consecrating to her honour the most beautiful month of all the twelve. Through the experience of former years, we are most of us pretty well acquainted with this pious custom. It may not be amiss, however, to recal to mind at the outset, something of its history and object. The month of May has not always been

consecrated to Our Lady. The devotion is of comparatively recent date in the Church : hardly earlier than the end of the last century. Let us learn, then, how it first began, and how it comes to be in such universal use at the present day.

The Church has always been the same in Faith. She never changes, nor can she change, as Our Lord has built her upon the Rock of Ages. Consequently, the great love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, now so prevalent, is nothing new. Catholics have ever loved Mary, and from the time of the Apostles till now there never existed a Catholic Church where her intercessory power was not fully acknowledged, and where she was not venerated and prayed to just as in these days. It does not follow from this, however, that the outward forms of prayer and homage have never changed. We pray to Mary with the same faith as our forefathers, but not always with the same forms. We accommodate ourselves, as far as possible, to the customs and spiritual wants of the age we live in ; and in doing so, we but carry out the intentions of Holy Church, which, like an indulgent and watchful mother, is ready to bend herself to each one's requirements and habits. The faith of the Church is unalterable. Not so her discipline, which, as necessity or prudence

may indicate, she modifies and suits to the times. Now, in the former ages of the Church, when the piety of the masses was more fervent and more fruitful in good works than now, pilgrimages to the Sanctuaries of Our Lady was one way in which true devotion showed itself. As the tidings used to reach any particular country, that some holy place had been favoured by a visit from the mother of God, or sanctified by prodigies, let it have been ever so distant, crowds of devout pilgrims would set out to gain the new sanctuary; and as they returned home happy and blessed, the neighbours would begin to follow their example, and thus, for many centuries, a continuous round of pious pilgrimages was kept up. The faith of our ancestors was displayed again, in the erection of innumerable churches and oratories dedicated to Mary; so that, taking England as an example, there was not a single church in that now faithless country, which in Catholic days, had not its Lady-chapel attached. Another beautiful practice of the olden times, and which still prevails amongst Catholic nations, was the placing of wayside crosses and stations on all the high and bye-roads, in which representations the prominent position due to Our Blessed Lady was never forgotten. Oh, how happy the country where

such customs obtain ! But, in process of time, this piety waned : and now, although there yet exist many places of sacred resort to Mary—although, where the true Faith has remained, there also remain the devout practices of Catholic days—still from external pressure and other circumstances, the ancient forms of devotion are not so generally followed as of old. The Church, however, is ever the same good mother ; and with loving solicitude she has provided even for our weakness and want of fervour. In very compassion she now brings to our doors, what formerly it might have required long journeys to procure. The Blessed Mother of God must be venerated and prayed to at any cost. Hence the multiplication, by Church authority, of the festivals of Our Lady : hence the institution of numberless confraternities in her honour : hence the investiture of the Scapulars of Mary : hence the many public devotions, the indulgenced prayers, the rosaries, and the medals we wear—and lastly, the most beautiful idea of consecrating the Month of May, as a special act of homage, to Our Blessed Lady.

This touching devotion, like so many others, originated in Catholic Italy. It was a holy missionary, named Father Lalomia, who appears first to have thought that, in

the same way as the servants of Mary are accustomed to honour her on one day particularly in the week, and to pray to her thrice a day besides, so would it be right and congruous to consecrate one month in the year to the especial honour of Our Blessed Lady. And what month could have been chosen more appropriate, or more like to Mary herself, than that in which all nature is fresh, and when the green foliage and the smiling flowers, seem so charmingly to invite us to love God, and His Blessed Mother? The Holy Father Pope Pius VII. soon approved of the pious design: and in order to give signal encouragement to so sweet a devotion, an apostolical brief of the 21st of March 1815, accorded an indulgence of 300 days for each day in the month to all the faithful who, during the Month of May, should honour the Most Holy Virgin by devotions, prayers, and other acts of virtue, and a plenary indulgence on one day in the same month, when, having duly confessed and communicated, they should pray for the necessities of the Church, and the intentions of His Holiness. Both indulgences can be applied, by way of suffrage, to the souls in purgatory. Sanctioned by such authority, the Month of Mary could not fail to spread and to prosper. And there are now few places in the Catholic

world, where this holy observance is not regularly carried out. Many blessings are sure to follow in the train of Our Lady: and, wherever the Month of May is so consecrated, there sinning souls are converted to grace, piety blooms forth anew, and the faith is sensibly revived. So true is it, that no one ever invoked in vain the intercession of the Mother of God.

The devotion of the Month of Mary is variously performed, according to the opportunities at hand or the places we are in. The most common way is to decorate an altar of the Blessed Virgin as profusely as possible with flowers and candles, and to meet there at a certain time in the day, or in the evening to recite the Litany, to read some pious meditation, or to listen to a discourse, and to say some prayers directly to Our Blessed Lady. But the best way to honour Mary, is to imitate her virtues. Thus, if any one were to think of dedicating this month to the Blessed Virgin, without at the same time endeavouring to curb his passions, to mend his life, and to turn to God, he would fall into a grievous mistake. There can be no homage so acceptable to Mary, as a change of heart and the renewal of fervour in the service of Almighty God.

It remains for us to see what our plan embraces, in the form of devotions for this

month. We shall make daily a meditation upon some of the most important truths concerning our salvation, at the conclusion of which, we shall always put ourselves for that day under the good patronage of Mary. We shall then pay a spiritual visit to some one of the famous Sanctuaries of Our Lady, throughout Christendom; and towards the end of our devotions we shall recite a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, taken from one of the canonized saints of Holy Church, or from other devout writers.

And now, as a good and fervent beginning to Mary's month, let us all make resolutions to spend it well, and in a manner pleasing to her. Let us not be content with avoiding mortal sin, but endeavour to keep clear of venial sin also. We may make this our special intention, during the month: and if as yet our minds do not easily yield to so holy a thought, with strict attention on our part to the daily meditations we are now to begin, Our Blessed Lady will procure such sentiments for us. But besides, let us endeavour during this month to induce some one who is out of the Church either through heresy or vice, to see his error, and to seek reconciliation with God where alone it can be found. Again, our appetite should be mortified somewhat more than ordinarily: for fasting or abstain-

ing in honour of Mary, is a practice time-honoured and good. Let us be especially careful, whilst making the Month of Mary, not to speak evil of others, or to judge any one rashly, or to provoke our neighbour to anger : and lastly, let us try to say the Rosary, to give alms to the poor, to visit daily the Blessed Sacrament, and thus every day to consecrate anew the sweet Month of May to Mary.

Oh, how sound a thing it is to be devout to the Blessed Virgin ! If we examine such as possess that devotion, we may find them wayward, impatient, or with many venial failings ; but in the main they are always good Christians. In the first place, Mary is the guardian of the Faith. We are, therefore sure of our faith, if we pay her true homage and devotion. But besides, she is the most powerful intercessor in pleading for us with Christ. Her Divine Son never refuses her anything ; and, if it be right to make a distinction, one could almost say that the worse the state of a man's soul the more pity has Mary. She is the " Consoler of the Afflicted," the " Help of Christians," and by these and other comforting names we love to invoke her ; but, by what title more tender or inspiring can we call her, we who are exiles in this vale of tears, sojourners in this world of sin, than " Mary,

Refuge of Sinners?" "Oh, pray then for us, glorious Virgin, Refuge of Sinners, that worthily, perseveringly, and with true piety we may so practice this touching devotion, as to find here a new light for our spirits, and thus to save our souls."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Of all the Sanctuaries of Our Lady, that of Bethlehem is surely the greatest—the first in order, the first in dignity. No Christian need be told the history of that holy place. Our Lord was born there, and there Our Lady tended and nursed Him. There Mary first began her sacred office in the Church, by presenting her divine Son to be adored, first by the poor, then by the rich. And did not those holy men, those first fruits of Christ's coming, did they not each, as they entered the sacred stable of Bethlehem, question His Mother, and ask if the Infant in the manger was not the Christ? and as she would assure them that so it was, can we not see them falling down to adore Him? Consequently the worship of the true God, and His true worship, comes to us through Mary, O beautiful thought for a Christian soul! and thus has it been ever since the scenes of Bethlehem till now. Mary is always leading men into the Church

procuring graces for them to make the step, and when they are there, helping them, consoling them, and above all, pointing out to them where the only true happiness and peace may be found, in the possession namely of Christ her Son, and in the participation of His Sacraments. Thus the events of Bethlehem are enacted over again for us. The holy precincts of the stable of Bethlehem have always been a Sanctuary of Mary, and excepting the interruption caused necessarily by the wars in Palestine, it has never been wanting in devout worshippers and pilgrims. If at Bethlehem there were no devotion to Mary, where would there be? For several centuries, and under some restrictions, the sacred shrine has been confided to the care of the Friars of the Order of St. Francis, who do all in their power to maintain the devotion which the feelings of the place generate to Mary. Let us make our pilgrimage thither in spirit: and be we rich or poor, whether we adore the divine Infant in the arms of His Mother, with the poor shepherds, or with the kings of the East, let the blessed Sanctuary of Bethlehem, inspire us henceforth to promote with ardour, the homage and love, which Mary so justly claims from Christians.

PRAYER OF ST. PETER DAMIAN.

O Holy Virgin, Mother of God! succour those who implore thine aid. Turn likewise affectionately towards us. I know, O my Sovereign Lady! that thou art all goodness, and that thou dost love us with a love that cannot be surpassed by any other love. How often dost thou not appease the anger of our Judge, when He is on the point of chastising us! All the treasures of the divine mercy are in thy hands. Turn then towards us, that we may be enabled to go and behold thee in heaven: for the greatest glory we possess, after seeing God, will be to see thee, to love thee, and to dwell beside thy throne. Be thou then pleased to listen to our prayer: for it is the will of thy beloved Son, to honour thee by denying thee nothing that thou askest. Amen.

Second Day.

ON THE END OF MAN.

MEDITATION.

IN order to obtain a real fruit from the series of meditations upon which we are now going to enter, it is necessary to commence with what is truly called the foundation of the whole spiritual life. The strength and endurance of a material house depend much, almost entirely, upon the plan of the foundations, and the manner in which they are laid. And not less so is it requisite to build upon a secure basis, and to set to work in earnest from the first, if we wish to raise surely and solidly the spiritual edifice of our souls.

To-day, therefore, let us begin by considering the end for which we were created. In the first place we must recal to our memory, that "man was created to praise, reverence, and serve his God, and by this means to save his soul."* And, we may ask ourselves, who was it that created us but God, Whose majesty and goodness are infinite? He need not have created us: for He was perfect without us. We are

* St. Ignatius' Exercises: "The Foundation."

therefore the work of His pure mercy ; and hence, as His bondsmen and slaves, we are obliged, whether we like it or not, to love and serve Him, and obey Him in this life. But Almighty God, in His endless love for man, has added besides a supreme reward in the next world, to be gained by those who obey Him in this. Thus, not only is it our duty to serve God here ; but, having served Him, it is our privilege to be happy with Him for ever hereafter. Oh, how much has He loved us, to have drawn us out of nothing with so high an object in view as the eternal glory of Heaven ! Where were we, any of us—the greatest, the best, but a few years ago ! And to what great things does not God call us, but some few years hence—the least, the poorest, the very worst amongst us ! Truly life is a dream, and nothing is great but God alone. Let us reflect earnestly how we have lived up to this great end. Have we spent our life in hunting after honours and riches—in seeking whatever pleasure this world may afford us—not thinking whether it was lawful or not, but caring only for our own indulgence ? If so, we have gone blindly astray from the path marked out to us ; we have been ungrateful to God, for the priceless blessings we hold from Him. To remember that God, the Great

and the Good, is the sole object worth seeking or gaining; and to think of the little, perchance, we may hitherto have done towards so high an end, is in very deed a startling reminder for a Christian soul.

Again, we must think how much we shall lose, by not keeping *always* before us the end for which we were created. Our Blessed Lord has said, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* And, in truth, supposing we do gain everything we desire here on earth, which yet never happens, what is all this compared to the loss of God, or the value of but one soul amongst us? Yet, he who seeks but the enjoyment of this life—who loves to be honoured and praised—to live at ease and in luxury, will most certainly lose his soul and his God. Oh, how ought we not even to fear the pleasures and allurements of the world, if they so easily take us from our true end, which is God! "No man can serve two masters—God and the world:"† but have we not tried to do so hitherto? Have we not been of those, who imagine they can give a small part of their hearts to God, whilst with the rest they serve the devil? And is this enough? Oh, no. God is our *only* end. For, let a man become rich or

* St. Matthew, xvi. 26.

† St. Matthew, vi. 24

powerful: let him obtain influence over others; let him be honoured and exalted above his fellow-creatures, with many advantages of body and mind—when he comes to die, what will all this profit him, if he has not served God alone? “Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin,”* say the Holy Scriptures, and “Remember man, that thou art dust, and unto dust shalt thou return,” repeats Holy Church—and truly. For, there may be those who remain impassible to all argument, whose heart cannot be touched by the most moving points of the Christian religion: but let such persons recollect the goal to which they are tending, let them but constantly bear in mind that they are to die, and as experience tells us, the fruit of such a thought is greater than the listening to many sermons, the reading good books, or even than a deep knowledge of Holy Scripture itself. And why? For the simplest reason. Because death is an inexorable master, who allows nothing to follow us beyond the grave. There is it that the rich man is stripped of his wealth, the eloquent become dumb, the noble is crushed in the dust, the proud man humbled. And what find we in death? Not earthly pleasures, not worldly honours, not power, nor influence over others, for

* Eccles. vii.

this earth has faded from our eyes; all that was enjoyable, all that contributed to temporal happiness, all is left behind,—and what find we but God? God, therefore, and He alone, is the true end of our life.

How plainly this appears, if we only take the opposite course, and try to serve creatures or make them serve us! After a first pleasure is gone, we are never but miserably deceived and disappointed. A holy writer has said,—“Dispose and order all things as thou desirest, and as it seemeth right to thee, and thou wilt find nought but suffering;”* but “to serve God is to possess a kingdom,” which means that he who serves God as his *last* end, and looks to *Him* for all, shall obtain all things even in this life.

Let us remember the end for which we were created—namely, “to praise, reverence, and to serve God, and by this means to save our souls.” God alone has a right to our service: for it is written, “Him only shalt thou serve.”† Therefore, every creature that stands between us and God, or that takes us from Him in any manner whatever, is to be shunned and detested as an agent of the devil. By a little reflection, we can discover how far we may have been guilty in this respect. Has anything been

* Imitation of Christ, Book 2. chap. xii.

† St. Matthew, iv. 10.

keeping us from God? and if so, what is it? Is it a bad companion, or an unlawful connexion, or some employment that is causing us to neglect our religion, or that places us in the dangerous occasions of sin? Is it pride, vanity, or ambition, or avarice, or any unbridled attachment to any person or thing, or a sinful habit? If these, or any others, be the chains that bind us, let us tear ourselves away from them without delay. But what sin is it that has stood us in the place of serving God, and saving our souls? It matters little what it is, if by committing it, we are thus diverted from the real end of our life: what colour soever it may assume, of a certainty it is the enemy of God, and therefore to be cut off, or we must lose our souls, and “what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”* Oh, let us think of this: and when we have thought of it, let us resolve that nothing shall ever separate us from the only object in life worth contending for, the love and service of God.

Those who lack courage in this warfare, may find an effective help by contemplating the glorious example of Our Blessed Lady. The assistance of so great an advocate as the Mother of God is very valuable, and as potent with us as it is valuable in itself. if

we but strive to imitate her virtues. We determine to-day to look more closely into the state of our souls, and examine thoroughly how far we have strayed from our last end—how much we have been blinded by pleasures, and the creatures of this world. But it is hard to do so; for this life is a warfare, and, as St. Paul assures us, one in which we shall not conquer without much labour. To animate us in the struggle, look up to Mary, the Mother of God, the Gate of Heaven, the Morning Star. Well may she be our model; for, beautiful and fair though she be, the most perfect of God's creatures, she was yet ever a creature, a journeyer like us in this vale of tears. And did she not keep her end—the true end of her existence, always before her? Who is comparable to her in this? And to what glory has she not been raised, because of her simple fidelity to this great truth? Let us ask Our Lady, therefore, continually to help us in keeping before our minds that we have come into this world for no other object, than to serve God here and to be happy with Him hereafter.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

We may now, in spirit, pay a devout visit to the celebrated sanctuary of Our Lady of

Mount Carmel, where, from the earliest times of Christianity down to the present day, a pious remembrance and veneration for the Mother of God has ever been retained. The sanctuary is situated upon ground once hallowed by the Prophet Elias and his disciples, who dwelt there. A magnificent church and a monastery of Carmelite friars, now stand in the holy spot. Doubtless the beautiful Month of May is well spent in that place, where the presiding recollections suggest at every step respect and love for Mary. The monks who inhabit it, take the name of their order from the mountain itself. They are known as the "Friars of Our Lady of Mount Carmel," and the order is noted for its devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The Brown Scapular, which is worn by so many pious Christians, forms a part of their religious habit. Let us go to-day at least in spirit, where we cannot go in fact. and join the good brethren in the prayers and praises they offer to Mary.

PRAYER OF FATHER CHRISTOPHER MAYER.

O Mother most merciful, do thou supply for me whatever is imperfect in the offering which I am making to thy beloved Son. May I thus learn to know thee as my Mother. O most clement Jesus, receive Thou this prayer from the hands of Thy Blessed

Mother: and when Thou hast united it to Thy merits, to her merits, and to those of all the Saints, do Thou present it to the Eternal Father for every pious, holy, and useful end. O Father, look Thou upon the Face of Thy well-beloved Son, and have mercy upon us, according to Thy good pleasure, to Thy greater and eternal glory. Amen.

Third Day.

ON THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE ARE TO
MAKE USE OF THIS WORLD.

MEDITATION.

YESTERDAY we endeavoured to call to mind the true and sole end of our existence: and having seen that it was God, and He only, both in this life and the next, we tried to reflect how far we had strayed from this path, and what had kept us from God. We resolved, moreover, that henceforth, cost what it might, nothing should be able to separate us from the service of God here, and eternal happiness with Him hereafter.

Let us now draw a practical conclusion from these thoughts. Not only was man created for the one object of serving God and saving his soul, but everything else on

earth was created for the same end, that is, as a help to man in attaining the final end of his creation. Oh, how good a Father our God has been to us ! He created everything necessary to preserve our life : and besides this, numberless creatures are called into being, solely that we might glorify God by such means, and thus save our souls. How many beautiful and various sights has He not given to our eyes : what sweet and harmonious sounds to our ears : what fragrant odours, how many substances delicious and enjoyable to the sense of taste and of touch, has not God created for us ! And all this to assist us in praising Him, and saving our souls ! Then let us look and see how faithfully all these creatures fulfil the end for which God made them ; how the horse draws his load, or carries his rider ; how the cow gives her milk ; how the sheep yields its wool to clothe us ; how the fishes are taken, and the oxen slaughtered ; how the very birds of the air sing the praises of God ! Do they not all, faithfully and without complaint, serve us and nourish us, because God so commanded ? Even so it is. What a lesson for us : and let it teach us that nothing is created on this earth, but for the sole object of serving God, and helping us to save our souls. God intended them all for His own glory, and for our

salvation. Hence if we pervert them to any other use whatever, we are going directly against the commands of God, and endangering our own souls. A short consideration will easily show us how far we may have made use of this world, contrary to the intentions of Almighty God, and at the risk of eternal salvation. When any one finds on reflection, that he has lost sight of his true end as the creature of God, he may be quite sure that his sin arises either from a too great attachment to pleasures, honours, and the comforts of this life, or from an unwillingness to bear that which is painful and trying. In the first case, "Self," and everything comprised in that word, is so evidently served and cared for instead of God, that it needs but a moment's reflection to see how, as a natural consequence, the real end of man is soon wholly lost sight of. But in the second, it is often still more the case: for poverty and bodily pain, sickness or insults, so readily awaken lowness of spirits, a certain horror of suffering, and even a murmuring against God, that never is it so easy to lose sight of the real end of man, as when our bodies or minds are worn out and afflicted.

To keep, therefore, our last aim and end effectively before us, it is necessary to place our hearts into a state of entire indifference,

so as to be able to resist the most pleasurable enjoyment if contrary to our last end, and to embrace willingly the hardest and most opprobrious state of life, if such only help us in obtaining it.

The supreme power which Almighty God possesses over all His creatures, obliges us to this indifference. We have to serve God, not in the particular way that it may please us, but as it pleases Him. We have not to decide how God is to be served, but He Himself: for God is the Ruler, and we are the servants. Even the angels in heaven must obey God; and shall poor miserable men presume to be choosers in any, when angels obey in all things? But the power of God is so great, that there are no limits to it. He made us, and we are His creatures: and who shall dare to say that He cannot act with us as He wills? A workman takes his work and uses it, or lays it aside, or uses it again, or throws it away, and destroys it, just as he has a mind: and shall not God do with His work what He will? In short, God can place us where He will, and treat us as He will. Be our lot therefore what it may, it is always our end to praise and to love Him: and to praise and love God is nothing else than to do His Holy Will. But, can any one say he is doing the will of God, if he is not

ready to receive with an equal grace health or sickness, happiness or trouble? How often do people exclaim, in their fancied piety, that they are ready to love God—but how? Perhaps they are in the enjoyment of worldly blessings, and nothing occurs to disturb them. It is not difficult for such to imagine that they love God, when they have no sacrifice to make, or when it costs them no pain or trouble. But are they willing to bless God equally in sickness and health, in poverty and in riches, when they are despised and insulted, as well as in honour? In a word, are they indifferent to all that happens, praising God in all? If not, they are not yet fulfilling the end of their existence, namely in “serving God, and thus saving their souls.”

We conclude from these reflections, that to serve Almighty God truly and sincerely, we must be perfectly content in whatever station or position He is pleased to place us. When we are well, we must be ready for sickness—when we are sick, we must not be impatient to get well: if we are rich, we must not grumble if God should reduce us even to the most abject misery: and in poverty, we have no right to envy or desire riches. To be despised or to be honoured must be the same to us; and whether we are neglected or abused, or placed high over

others, God is equally to be praised for all. This is serving God in earnest.

But besides, we should look upon our Creator as the God of Providence, as Him by Whose hand all things are directed and disposed in all places. It is of faith, that nothing happens by chance or without the divine permission. Hence if a man be sick, or in robust health, or if he be rich and another man poor, it is the same God that disposes and rules all. If to-day we are in honour, and to-morrow despised and insulted, it is because God wishes it: and is it not better to endure cheerfully the greatest misery, if such be the will of God, than to be free from all trouble, to please one's self—which never yet comes to pass, as experience shows that he who seeks but the will of God, is infinitely more happy, even in his wretchedness, than the mere pleasure-hunter who looks but to "Self" in all things.

This then is the secret of real happiness, both here and hereafter—indifference to whatever befalls us, so long as we but recognize there the will of our heavenly Father. We may say prayers without end, and be ever making resolutions: but no one has learned to use with profit the creatures of this life, and by such means to save his soul,—unless he knows how to detach himself from the world in the very midst of plea-

asures and honours, so as to be ready to abandon them, when God so commands—unless he be perfectly willing to embrace whatever crosses and humiliations may be sent him. The nearer we approach this standard, the more surely are we living up to the only end of man on earth: and if thus we learn to use His creatures, for His glory and for our own salvation, God in His turn will bestow such a happiness upon us, even here below, that none can know but those who have tried it.

In order to strengthen the resolve we now make to live in this manner, let us fervently invoke the help of Our Blessed Lady. Consider, for our comfort, that if she is now the highest in heaven, she was once amongst the lowly ones on earth—that if she is now in glory, seated on the most resplendent throne after that of God, it is because she ever lived in perfect conformity to the divine will, suffering all things, enduring all things—and who, except her divine Son, ever endured or suffered as she did?—yet desiring nothing beyond it, content in all, and to the last praising God for all. “O Mary, most perfect of creatures! procure for us the priceless grace of ever keeping before us the true end of our existence, that so we may become indifferent to all that God sends us, desiring nothing but to

be able to obey Him, love Him, and praise Him in every place and for everything—and that thus we may save our souls.”

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Constantinople, by reason of the multitude of churches erected there to the honour of Mary, was once known by the glorious name of “the City of the Mother of God.” The most beautiful of these churches was built by the Empress Pulcheria, immediately after the famous Council of Ephesus: and there was hardly a street or any house of importance, that did not possess its church or chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. How must not Mary have been loved and venerated, in that once holy city. But now how changed! a foreign and unchristian race have for centuries polluted and destroyed the sanctuary of the Mother of God, they knew her not, and in Constantinople there is kept no month of Mary. We cannot go there joyfully, as we may to other sanctuaries. We can but weep, that a savage horde should possess the heritage of the Mother of all Christendom. Let us travel thither, however, in company with the spirits of our pious forefathers, and in spirit let us live again through the early centuries of the Church, when love for

Mary shone so brightly in the hearts of men, that a whole town was made her sanctuary.

PRAYER OF ST. GERMANUS, PATRIARCH OF
CONSTANTINOPLE.

O mine only and sovereign Lady, who art the sole consolation I receive from God : thou, who art the heavenly dew that doth refresh me in my sufferings : thou, who art the light of my soul when it is surrounded with darkness : thou, who art my guide when I travel, my strength in weakness, my treasure in poverty, the balm of my wounds, my comfort in affliction, my refuge in misery, the hope of my salvation ! O hear thou my prayers, have pity on me, as becometh the Mother of a God Who has such love for men ! Make me worthy to enjoy with thee that great happiness which thou dost enjoy in heaven. I know that, being the mother of God, thou canst, if thou wilt, obtain it for me. O Mary, thou art omnipotent to save sinners, nor needest thou any other recommendation : for thou art the Mother of true life. Amen.

Fourth Day.

ON THE SIN OF THE ANGELS.

MEDITATION.

THE meditation of to-day will take us a step further, in the work of examining the state of our souls. Having seen that man has but one end in life, and that everything else is merely a means to that end, whether it brings us pleasure or suffering, and consequently to be embraced with equal submission and cheerfulness, it follows, that he who does not carry out this rule in his actions, is offending God, or in other words committing sin. Sin, therefore, is the great and only evil of the world, and the whole energies of a religious mind are required to rid one's self of it. Thus let us endeavour, first, to obtain some knowledge of the nature of this great evil, by contemplating the fruits of sin in the fall of the angels from heaven. Let us go back a little with the mind of our faith, and look into that wondrous space of time, when God created heaven and filled it with angels. What can be conceived happier and more enjoyable, than the state of those spirits? Their beauty was such, that no mortal could have gazed upon it without dying for joy. Their

wisdom was so great and so clear, that the wisdom of Solomon, though divinely infused, was yet a very ignorance compared to it. The utmost amount of happiness was their portion of an existence, which knew not pain or sorrow. Added to this, they possessed the fullest and most intimate knowledge of God, and were linked with Him in a perfect bond of love and friendship. Such, and even far beyond these, were the gifts and graces of the angels; yet such gifts and graces did those angels abuse. They would not serve God, as He willed they should:—they sinned, and were punished. Now, let us consider the quality and nature of their punishment.

These unhappy angels were changed, in one instant, from the most beautiful of beings into the most horrible devils—from the loveliest and most beloved of the children of God, into the objects of His eternal hatred.

They were cast down from their seats in heaven, into the very bottom of the abyss of hell: and there, from that moment they have endured, are enduring, and will ever endure, all that it is possible to suffer—the biting and sorrowful remorse for the past, the most fearful despair of the future. Instead of the bright intellect of their first existence, a darksome night lies as a curse upon their

bleared understandings, whilst their entire powers are eaten up with the flame of a fire, that burns without destroying.

This direful punishment was the effect of God's justice. Had it pleased Him to grant the falling angels but a moment of time, without doubt they would have instantly repented of their sin, and have served and loved Him to all eternity. But the justice of God would not allow it. They received no mercy.

And there was no atonement for this sin. These miserable spirits had burned for more than four thousand years, before Christ became man to redeem the world. Did their punishment end then? Oh, no. That loving Saviour, Who shed so many tears over the city of Jerusalem, shed no tear for them. That Heart of Jesus, pierced and wrung, Whose Precious Blood flowed in streams for us—that tender heart had not one single throb for them. Unfortunate—thrice unfortunate spirits! they sinned but for a moment, and their punishment is for ever, for ever, and for ever.

Now may we cast one glance into that fiery prison which holds them. Behold their frightful look and appearance, so terrible that man cannot even fancy it without horror: behold their pains and agonies, so great that no human mind can conceive

them. And when we have looked upon them, let us say to ourselves—these cursed beings, these hideous objects—these monsters, were they not once the chosen children of God? were they not, in their entrancing beauty, the very masterpieces of His almighty power—the inmates of heaven? What have they done then, to suffer such misery? They committed a sin. But their sin was momentary—a single sin, one sinful thought—a sin of disobedience: and for that one sin, already they have been burning near six thousand years in hell. And who has passed a sentence so severe, and so awful, upon them? God! O most terrible of truths: Almighty God Himself! But God is infinitely just, and infinitely good and merciful. It follows, then, that sin is the most dreadful evil, since it is accompanied by so terrible a punishment.

If such is the fate of the angels of heaven for one sin, what are we to think when we look to our own sins? Which, indeed shall excite in us the greatest astonishment, the rigour of God's justice to the fallen angels, or the fulness of His mercy to us? Those beautiful ones of heaven commit but a single sin, and they are cast for ever into hell: and we, who are but dust of the earth, have committed sins without number—and yet He has had mercy on us! and again we

committed sin, once more we abused His mercy, and again did He spare us. Even now, as we stand here, is He not stretching out the arms of His love towards us? O patience, admirable and enduring, of the Lord Our God! May His Name be ever praised for it!

Whoever has sinned but once, mortally, in his life—may speak thus truly to his soul: “I have offended a God that has loved me more than thousands and millions of the noblest of beings—a God, that has sheltered me with His almighty arm, even in the midst of my sins—a God, that still proffers me a tender love, despite my sins: and, O my soul, how couldst thou have despised and scorned so great a love? and canst thou yet continue to sin in His sight? Oh no: I see how great an evil sin is—and what must mine have been in Thy sight, O Jesus! My God, my Saviour, I acknowledge my sins, I hate them, I curse them from this hour.” Thus may we all discourse with our souls: for who can sin again before heaven, if he thinks of the lost angels, and the long night of their punishment in hell? Have we not perhaps deserved the same, not once, but hundreds of times? and where might we be now, were it not for the infinite mercy of God? Let us leave nothing undone, to avoid in future so great

an evil. But when sin, with its thousand allurements, seduces and tempts us, to whom then shall we recur for help ? to whom, but to the most Blessed Mary ever a Virgin, conceived without sin ?

If God so hates sin, and if the only bar to His love is sin, how must He not love her, whose soul was never stained with its approach ! If again, our good God has loved us so much, notwithstanding our sins, what love can we imagine too great for Mary, who never either by original or actual sin gave Him cause to reject her ? Let us then call confidently upon Our Blessed Lady, and beseech her to obtain for us a freedom from this great evil, to keep us from the occasions of sin, to procure us grace to resist it, to watch over us, to guard us, to pray for us, and never to desist in the assistance she gives us, till she has brought our souls, sinless and white as we received them in baptism, to the eternal gates of heaven.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Whither, at present, can we better speed to pay our spiritual visit to Mary, than to the glorious church of St. Peter in Rome ? The Eternal City is conspicuous for its devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and any one

who has been there, is well cognizant of the filial love and genuine piety of the Roman people in this regard. They call her affectionately "Mamma mia," or "My Mother," or else they address her reverentially by the title of "Madonna," or "My Lady," and withal so unrestrainedly and naturally, that it is easy to see how perfectly a part of his very system, is love for Mary, to an inhabitant of Rome. Everything is done there, that can be done to honour the Blessed Virgin : her numerous churches are thronged : the devotions and novenas in her honour well attended : the public business is regulated by the sound of the bell, that rings out the Ave Maria : the very atmosphere of Rome breathes devotion to Mary : and although the principal church of Rome, the Cathedral of the world, is not dedicated to her, it yet glories in the guardianship of Mary. It was in this church on the 8th of December, in the year of grace 1854, amid the acclamations of thousands, and surrounded by the representative bishops of all countries in the world, that our Holy Father the Pope, in virtue of the power given him by Christ, defined and proclaimed that Mary ever Virgin, the Mother of God, had been conceived without sin, that she had formed an exception to the common rule of the children of Eve, that she had

never known the great evil—sin. O glorious church of St. Peter, glorious because of its noble expanse and majestic proportions: doubly glorious because the Cathedral of the Vicar of Christ on earth, and as containing the relics of the holy Apostles: but thrice glorious, because beneath its vast dome, and within its hallowed walls, were first heard those words, which publicly recognized and proclaimed, as an article of faith, the brightest gem in the crown of Mary! Let us travel there in spirit, and praise God, that so great a glory has been conferred on His Church in these days: and let us bless that sanctuary of Mary, whose privilege it was to receive first the divine accents, as like the manna of old they descended to us from heaven.

PRAYER OF SAINT ALPHONSUS.

O my immaculate Lady! I rejoice with thee, on seeing thee enriched with so great a purity. I do thank, and resolve always to thank, our common Creator for having preserved thee from every stain of sin: and I firmly believe this doctrine, and am prepared even to lay down my life, should this be necessary, in defence of this thy so great and singular privilege of being conceived without sin O most sweet, most amiable, immaculate Mary, thou who art so

beautiful in the eyes of thy Lord, disdain not to cast thine eyes of compassion on the wounds of my soul, loathsome as they are. Behold me, have pity on me, heal me O thou, who from the first moment of thy life didst appear pure and beautiful before God, pity me, who not only was born in sin, but who again since baptism have stained my soul with crimes. What favour will God ever refuse thee Who chose thee for His Daughter, His Mother, and Spouse, and therefore preserved thee from every stain, and in His love preferred thee to all other creatures? Amen.

Fifth Day.

ON THE SIN OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

MEDITATION.

LET us try once more to obtain for ourselves some knowledge of the infinite malice of mortal sin, by considering the sin of our first parents, and how Almighty God punished it.

Never, since the beginning of the world, has so great a happiness been enjoyed on earth, as by Adam and Eve, when God

placed them in the garden of paradise. Thither came neither heat nor cold, nor rain, nor wind: a delightful sunshine was ever beaming upon the inhabitants of that favoured spot: no labour was wanting to till the ground: the trees brought forth their fruits of themselves, and the earth yielded abundantly the most luxuriant plants and flowers. Our first parents had bestowed upon them a complete power over all created animals, so that at their only word the birds, the very fishes, and every living creature came and went as they commanded them. They had bodies like ours, yet different: for they never endured fatigue, nor suffered pain or sickness, and the fear of death, or the cares and weakness of old age, were unknown to them. Their souls also were like ours, yet so different: for constituted as they were in a state of original justice, they possessed a perfect mastery over all their passions, so that neither sorrow, nor anger, nor envy, nor hatred, nor any other undue feeling had power to rule them. They were gifted with an intimate knowledge of God, and with a most ardent love for Him. Lastly, they could look forward after a long and happy life to a passing, without sickness or death, body and soul united, to heaven, there to reign with God to all eternity. In

the Holy Scriptures we read, that God created them only "a little less than the angels in dignity." But like some amongst that heavenly host, they were as ungrateful to God, as God had been gracious to them. They would not serve Him in the manner He wished. They sinned : and were punished.

Let us now recal all the circumstances and results of their punishment, and endeavour to see thence the character of the sin committed.—Because of this one sin, Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise: the earth has been cursed, and has become incapable of producing anything without intense labour at the sweat of the brow: our bodies have been cursed, and condemned to infirmities, acute pains, ending only with the sting of death.—Moreover, because of this one sin, many thousands and millions of men, the children of Adam, have had to endure much suffering in life, and to meet finally with a bitter death. We may imagine an immense tract of country, as long as it is broad, covered all over with the bones and corpses of the dead and dying, which rise upwards for miles in the air, and say to ourselves "All this has happened on account of one sin."—Again, because of this single sin, not only must every man die, but the greater part of man-

kind are condemned to hell. For why are men damned, but because they have yielded to the evil dispositions of our corrupted nature, which is the result of this sin? Thousands and millions condemned to hell every year because of one sin!—Also, because of this one sin, Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Lamb without spot, the only begotten Son of God, has become Man, and suffered on earth, and has shed the last drop of His blood for us on the altar of the cross.—Lastly, because of this single sin of our first parents, Paradise has been lost to us, and we are wanderers hither and thither in this vale of tears: our life is full of trouble and bitterness, and we shrink from death with fear and trembling: we are not sure if we shall be saved, and, in all cases, we can never enter heaven but by the road of tears and penance.—Such is a faint idea of the woful punishment which Adam and Eve brought down upon their children by one sin. An *idea* we call it; because no man on earth can comprehend, in its entirety, the real nature of the curse with which God cursed our first parents.

What inference must we now draw for ourselves? This—namely, that if a single sin has been such a blot in the sight of God, what a horrible object must be the state of

a sinning soul! Whoever has committed but one mortal sin, has committed as many as one of the demons in hell; and if he has committed a hundred, he has committed as many sins as a hundred of those demons, and his soul is in one sense as abominable before God as all that number of damned spirits together.—Still further. When a man has committed but a single mortal sin, he has deserved hell as much as any one of those lost spirits; and when he has committed more than one such sin, he has merited hell more than any one of the lost spirits. How comes it then, that every man that has sinned mortally, but once even, is not now in company with the devils burning eternally in hell? How comes it? Aye, well may we ask the question. It is solely because our common Creator has dealt out His mercy to us, whilst upon them fell the exercise of His divine justice. O the love, the goodness, the infinite patience of our God!

What great truths, therefore, does not our holy Faith teach us, with regard to the malicious nature of sin! and who that has sinned can think of them without, on the one hand, shuddering with fear at the thought of his own soul, and on the other without thanking heartily his God for the boundless mercy shown to him! The most

beautiful of the angels fell from heaven, the whole race of mankind were cast out of Paradise, hosts upon hosts of souls are now burning in the flames of hell, Jesus the Son of God died upon the cross—and all by reason of one single sin committed! Oh, what must be the state of a soul in mortal sin: what an awful amount of evil must lie hidden there! and if God spared not the angels, nor our first parents, nor even His own Son, what think we may be the lot of those, whose souls are monsters of sin, who have scorned the voice of the messengers whom God sent to call them to repentance, who, after being so often pardoned, have so often fallen back again. With great fear should not such a sinner fly at once to God, and thus, from his innermost soul, beseech Him saying—"O Lord my God, and Creator! have mercy once more, have mercy on me. I now see how terrible an evil sin is. I see it in the fire and the torments of the lost souls in hell—I see it in all the misery and wretchedness around me on earth, the consequence of sin—I see it in the pains and martyrdom of my dying Lord on the cross. O dreadful thought! that I, by my sins, should have caused the death of the loving Jesus! O sin, accursed sin! never more will I commit, never more will I harbour thee,

or yield to thine evil temptations. Away for ever with sin, and by Thy mercy, O Jesus, may no such evil again separate me from the love and service I owe to God."

In conclusion, let us invoke with heartfelt devotion the patronage of Our Blessed Lady, Refuge of Sinners. Where is the sinner, however grievously he may have sinned, that cannot find rest in the Immaculate Heart of her who is the Mother of the God of Mercy, in that tender Heart, ever inseparably united with the Heart of Jesus flowing for us poor sinners! Let us all approach then with confidence, and ask Our Blessed Lady to obtain for us the especial grace of entertaining for the future such an extreme horror for the greatest of evils—sin, that we may be able to resolve rather to die than commit one sin again.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Our Lady of Sarrances is one of the many sanctuaries, which Southern France possesses. It is situated in the diocese of Bayonne in the Lower Pyrenees, almost on the borders of the two Catholic countries of France and Spain. On the banks of the Gâve, at the further extremity of a lovely valley, in a holy solitude, lie the church and monastery of "Nôtre Dame" or "Our Lady of Sarrances." The origin of

this romantic sanctuary is scarcely known. Some have thought, that it can be traced back to a period in the ninth century. One thing is certain, however, that long before the ravages of the so-called Reformation in that country, Our Lady of Sarrances was a place of great devotion to high and low, rich and poor. It is recorded, that the two kings of Navarre and Arragon, and the sovereign prince of Bearn, having met by chance on the occasion of a pilgrimage to this Sanctuary, were much struck at a rencounter so apparently providential, and calling to mind the visit of the three kings to the stable of Bethlehem, they placed themselves under the special protection of the Queen of Heaven, and made rich offerings at the Sanctuary. A great many more traits of devotion could be brought forward, to prove the great love of our forefathers to Our Lady of Sarrances. But these happy days were not of long duration : the foul heresy of Calvin was let loose on that unfortunate country, and in its time the abbey of Sarrances, and the Sanctuary itself, were pillaged and burnt. There was desolation in the holy place till about the beginning of the seventeenth century, when, by the zeal of the King of France, the Catholic religion having been restored to the territory of Bearn, the church of

Our Lady was rebuilt, the monastery re-established, the image of Mary replaced, and the pious inhabitants, with tears of joy, as it is related, gave back to her the worship which their fathers had handed down to them. The church and the monastery were confided to the monks of the order of Premontr , and these monuments still exist to testify by their magnificence to the faith of our ancestors. The Sanctuary suffered, of course, in the old French Revolution, but not over much; and the devotion and pilgrimage are still, to a certain extent, vigorous. The principal feast of the pilgrimage is the 15th of August, the festival of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven; and a good Christian gentleman, who was present at the Sanctuary, in 1842, on that day, described it as well and numerously attended. And if it was so then, certainly it must have wonderfully increased since, now that religion has taken such a stand in France. Let us join the devout groups assembled there in this Month of May, and let us send up a good prayer in spirit to Our Lady of Sarrances.

PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD.

O thou, who art Our Lady, our mediator, our advocate, do thou reconcile us—do thou commend us to thy Son. O thou,

who art blessed by the grace which thou didst find, by the privilege which thou didst merit, by that mercy to which thou didst give birth, O grant that He Who, through thee, deigned to partake of our infirmity and misery, may also, by thine intercession, make us partakers of His happiness and glory. Amen.

Sixth Day.

ON OUR OWN SINS.

MEDITATION.

HAVING contemplated the great evil of sin, by viewing the consequences which have followed the sin of the angels, and that of our first parents, we yet must not leave this subject until we have witnessed the effects which sin produces in the soul of man. Of little use is it, indeed, to reflect upon the sins of others, unless likewise we look to our own souls, and examine how we may have resembled those, whose dreadful example has already come before us.

Let us behold then for a moment the soul of a man, who has been unhappy enough to fall into mortal sin.

The very instant he committed that sin, his soul, from a beautiful image of God, became changed into an abominable monster. No one in this world, without a special revelation, can ever understand the surpassing beauty of a soul in the grace of God. But in proportion as it is beautiful in grace, so does it become horrible by the commission of sin. In one sense, there is little difference between a damned soul, and a soul in mortal sin : for, as no human being could look upon a demon without falling dead through terror, so in like manner, if a soul in mortal sin were revealed to our eyes, we should die for very fear at the sight.

The instant a mortal sin is committed, the soul of him who committed it becomes possessed with the spirit of the devil. It is a lamentable thing for any Christian to be possessed by a devil, to have to carry day and night in his body one of the lost spirits of hell : what must it be then, in fact, to deliver one's soul itself over to the power of the devil ! He who is possessed by an evil spirit, may still be a child of God, and can freely hope one day to obtain heaven : but he who has delivered his soul over to the power of the devil by mortal sin, is the enemy of God, and stands in

imminent danger of being cast down every moment into hell.

But can anything be more shameful than sin? Let us suppose that Almighty God should so open our eyes as to enable us to see into the heart of any one amongst us, to perceive distinctly all the sins and crimes which that person had committed in thought, word, or deed, through the long course of his life. What a shame, what a disgrace for that poor soul! Would he not seek to hide himself, and call upon the mountains to cover him, rather than that his fellow-men should see his face? and this would be but the righteous judgment of his own conscience. And does not God see into every thought and secret feeling of the heart? If a soul in mortal sin would flee then for shame from the sight of men, how much more truly shameful is it not in the sight of Almighty God!

Further: we shall understand better the greatness of the evil of sin in our souls, if we but consider what poor ~~miserable~~ creatures we are in ourselves, and how utterly dependent on God. What are we, in fact? a handful of clay: a few years ago we were nothing, no one had ever heard of us: a short time hence, we shall be all rotting in the grave. And yet this worm of the earth, this dust, this miserable creature, has lifted

its hand against God, has withstood the commands of its own Maker!—Besides, what has not God done for us? He has bestowed countless blessings upon us, so that there is no moment in our whole lives, day or night, in which He has not given us some new blessing, nor will there ever come a moment of our lives on earth in which He will not still bless us. All this He has done for us, with an infinite love: and the while, He might have dealt out to others the graces He gave to us—to others, who, perhaps, deserved them better—to others, who would have served Him better with them. Indeed, so much have we from God, that we depend entirely on Him. What ingratitude then, nay, what insanity to sin against His divine Majesty! Supposing that the paralytic in the Gospel had turned round after his cure, and struck the Sacred Person of Our Lord, with the very hands that were healed by Jesus; or supposing, that the man deaf and dumb from his childhood, whose tongue Our Blessed Lord Himself let loose, had begun with that very tongue to insult and blaspheme Him when dying on the Cross,—“what a horrible ingratitude!” we should say. But say again, who was it that created those tongues that are ever insulting God? who made those eyes, those ears, and hands,

who made all the members of our body, and who formed our soul?—and we are ungrateful enough to offend that Maker !

Again, by committing sin, a man insults the great Majesty of God. To strike one's fellow-citizen is an offence against the law : but how much greater that offence, if directed against the person of the Sovereign. Oh, what a crime must then sin be ! for who is God, but the King of kings, and the Lord of lords ? God is infinitely good, infinitely holy, infinitely powerful, infinitely beautiful, just, merciful, infinite in all His perfections, and all that is good in creatures springs from Him. Nothing is good without Him, nothing holy, nothing beautiful, nothing just. With Him all is happiness, loveliness, goodness, and mercy, in an infinite degree. And to think that we have offended so great a Good, wilfully and with malice ! Let us turn towards heaven, and represent to our minds that which is now passing there. See Almighty God Himself upon His throne, surrounded upon every side by legions of angels and saints—see them entranced as they gaze on His splendour and glory—see how they praise and magnify Him, each and every one, with all the power and nobleness of a heavenly spirit, and perceiving that enough of praise or love can never be

given to so great a Majesty, these holy ones throw themselves upon their faces, confessing that He is worthy of far greater honour than they can ever give. But suddenly there arises in the midst of this mighty host of spirits, a miserable worm of the earth, that begins forthwith to insult and dishonour the divine Majesty. Who can comprehend so great a crime? none but God: for the angels themselves, were they, with the whole wisdom of their understandings, to endeavour to comprehend it in all its magnitude, they could not. And a soul in mortal sin has committed that crime! Where does there exist an evil like to this? Sin then is the greatest of all evils. Oh, in the face of such truths as these, who is there that has sinned, once even, but should fly without delay to the throne of God for pardon? "O great God!" he should cry, "I see my sin. I have offended Thee: and who am I? not a Lucifer, not a seraph, not an angel, but a poor worldling, a wretched worm of this earth. And Thou, whom I have insulted, who art Thou? not a king, nor an angel, nor a seraph, but God, the highest Good, the Fountain of all Good, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. I have injured Thee: and where? perhaps secretly, when Thou wert absent—not so, but openly, before

Thy very face. I have sinned against Thee: and by what means? with the very eyes, the very ears, the very tongue, the hands, the very body Thou Thyself didst give me. I have sinned against Thee: and for what? perhaps because I had been promised a kingdom, or at least with the hope of riches, or because I was driven to it by the fear of a cruel death—none of these; but, to indulge perchance some shameful pleasure, or because I feared some little humiliation or passing pain. I have sinned against Thee: and how often? not once, but ten, twenty, hundreds of times: and those perhaps at the very moment Thou wert preserving me in health and comfort, when for certain Thou wert pouring grace after grace on my soul, to prevent the devil from tearing me down into hell. O God of heaven, how great has been my wickedness!"

Let us now look back upon our own lives and see, whether we also ought not thus to run for forgiveness to God. Have we been unfortunate enough to commit mortal sin in our thoughts, words, or actions, let us try to remember the time, the first occasion, we fell from God. Oh, what an evil hour is that for a soul in life! the first mortal sin! how lovely and fair our soul, in all the purity and innocence of youth, a chaste and hallowed spirit, the

sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, the image of God imprinted freshly upon it! With what benignant love does God look down upon that soul: what glory it must give to God, and what pleasure to the angels and saints: and the angel guardian of that soul, what joy does there not beam from his celestial countenance, as he delights to lead it, and watch it, pray with it, and protect it! Can we not almost fancy him returning, every now and then, from earth to heaven, to recount his happiness, and to relate how there exists on earth at least one soul—his dear charge—free from sin and preparing for heaven. But the first mortal sin! Oh, that fatal moment! a beautiful soul has become changed into a hideous monster, the enemy of God and His saints:—and the angel guardian of that soul, must not the very lustre of his throne become dimmed at the horrid sight? What a foul blot on a Christian soul is sin! Let us then shun it, and loathe it, and turn from it with disgust when it approaches; but above all, let us excite ourselves to a real contrition. If we have sinned against a God Who is infinitely good in Himself, and infinitely good to us, we have sinned shamefully, barefacedly, before the majesty of heaven, before the great God of the universe, Who made us.

What sorrow too deep to fill our hearts ! Let us then turn a moment to Mary, and beseech her to pray for us poor sinners that we may receive the grace of true and hearty contrition. When we remember our sins, and at the same time call to mind the infinite majesty of Him we have offended, and the consequent magnitude of our sins, is it not a consolation to have Mary there to plead for us with her Son, we who are but miserable worms, defiled with sin, and unfit for the presence of so good and loving a God ? Let us, therefore, confidently seek her : for she is indeed the "Health of the weak," "the Consoler of the afflicted"—and if in real earnest we wish to turn to God, she will be the "Morning Star" dawning upon us after the long dark night of our misery and sin.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

The visits which we make spiritually this month to Our Blessed Lady will conduct us to-day to the city of Ephesus, once so famous, but of which now there are few remains. It was in this city that the title of Mother of God, given to Mary, was fully approved and confirmed by a general council of the Church, held in the year of grace 431. The Catholic Church has always

believed, that Mary was the Mother of Him, who united in His Sacred Person the nature of God and the nature of man—and that, therefore, she was truly called the Mother of God. But some impious heretics having denied it, the Council of Ephesus was held to confute and condemn them. It is related in history, that the people of Ephesus displayed the greatest anxiety about the result of that Council. They were loving servants of Mary, and their fear was therefore natural, lest by any chance the honour due to their Mother should be withheld her. But great was their exultation, when the bishops coming forth from the Council proclaimed Mary to be the Mother of God. Catching up the sound, they repeated it again and again with shouts of joy. Let us join our voices to that Christian multitude, and as we listen with the ear of faith to the glorious title, let us in our hearts determine to defend her honour evermore against those who blasphemously deny that Mary is the Mother of God.

PRAYER OF SAINT ATHANASIUS.

Give ear to our prayers, O most holy Virgin! and be thou mindful of us. Dispense unto us those riches and that abundance of graces, with which thou art filled. The archangel saluted thee and called thee

“full of grace.” All nations call thee “blessed.” The whole hierarchy of heaven bless thee: and we, who are of the hierarchy of this earth, also address thee, saying, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Pray for us, O Mother of God, our Lady, our Queen.” Amen.

Seventh Day.

ON THE PAIN OF “LOSS” IN HELL.

MEDITATION.

OUR meditations upon the great evil of sin have occupied us chiefly in considering the malignity of its nature, at first by means of the example of those who have fallen into sin, and again by contemplating the effects it produces in the soul of man. Such however is our weakness and misery, that even these truths, soul-stirring as they are, may yet fail in exciting us to a true horror for sin, unless we furthermore arm ourselves with the “fear of the Lord,” which, as the prophet tells us, is the “beginning of wisdom.* To become wise unto salvation, we must fear, not those who can only kill the body, but Him “Who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.”† The fear of hell, therefore,

* Psalm, cx.

† Saint Luke, xii. 4. 5.

is presented to us, that by remembering the dreadful punishment which awaits in the next world the commission of mortal sin, we may begin to hate sin and everything that leads to it.

The first pain we should think of in hell, and no doubt the greatest, is the pain of “Loss.” By this we mean the loss of Almighty God. So great is this loss, that it is as surely impossible for our minds to comprehend it, as it may be to know fully in this world the infinite goodness of God Himself. Still, we possess sufficient reason and understanding, to form to ourselves some faint idea of what it is to lose God in hell. Proceeding with this thought, let us consider that a soul condemned to hell, loses for ever the pleasure of possessing and enjoying God. The moment it passes the threshold of that infernal dungeon, Almighty God infuses into that soul such a light as to enable it to understand wholly the infinite beauty and perfection of His being, as far as any creature may, together with a desire to possess Him so great and drawing, that the mere deprivation of such pleasure for a moment becomes an infinite source of pain. In the same instant, the frightful truth flashes upon that unfortunate soul, that for ever and ever he is cast out from his God—never, never, to enjoy Him.

The torments of hell are inconceivable ; but there is no torment like to this.

Further :—a soul condemned to hell, loses altogether the care and protection of God. So long as a man remains upon earth, Almighty God keeps him and shelters him. He puts good thoughts into his mind, He awakens holy desires in his heart, He almost drives him to do good, He comforts and strengthens him. The moment the soul enters hell, all this comes to an end : God, so to speak, lays him by—and regards him as a thing not worth caring for. Hence, during all the long night of eternity, that soul never receives one good thought into his mind : he never has a holy inspiration, nor a pious desire, nor as much as one single wish to do something good. His imagination becomes filled with the most terrible pictures ; his understanding is black and clouded ; he wills nothing, but that which is prompted by rage and passion, the whole powers of his soul, are nought but darkness and the most bitter despair.

Again :—a soul condemned to hell, when it loses God, loses together with Him, the love and solicitude of all His creatures. Whilst we remain in this world, the Blessed Virgin, the Angels, and Saints, and our Angel Guardians, love us ; but, once a man has been rejected by God, he is abandoned

likewise by the holy spirits of heaven, and that for ever and for ever. So also with all those, who have loved us on earth. If a mother has been saved, she will have no compassion for her children who are lost: if a child is saved, it will not heed the torments and punishment awarded to its own parents. And if such is the feeling of those who are saved towards those who are lost, what must it be in hell itself! Husband and wife, brother and sister, the nearest relations, the best friends, fathers, and sons, will all burn with such an infernal frenzy and hatred towards each other, as those alone can know who have been sent for ever to hell. Amongst the countless multitude of souls confined in that terrible prison, not a single one will there be, whose presence will not add pain and torment without end to every other lost soul. We should never forget, besides, that the master of hell is the devil, who hates a human soul with the hatred of eternity: and to him is given a power and strength unknown here on earth, with the mind of a fiend, artful and keen in devising every manner of torture and pain for his victims. What an awful thing for a poor soul, to fall into such hands!

One more thought on the pain of “Loss.” Having lost the enjoyment of God, what

does the condemned soul find in His Almighty presence? It finds a deadly and eternal enemy.—But how, it may be asked, can God, Who is the highest Good, and Who is in Himself the greatest happiness of man, how can He become the enemy of man? And yet He can, and does. Let us then mark well how this happens. 1. God keeps up in the lost soul the most lively knowledge of His infinite beauty, and the strongest desire to possess Him: but this, far from being in the least satisfied, is but the cause of endless rebuffs and disappointment, so that the more the poor unfortunate is irresistibly drawn towards God, the greater the desolation which fills his heart. 2. The face of God, so lovely and amiable to the good, so entrancing, that the saints could have died to behold it but once—that face, wears to a lost soul the continual aspect of terrific anger. Hence, it will be ever seeking to flee from the divine presence: but, the further it goes, the nearer do those awful eyes approach. Oh, who can withstand the anger and rage of the living God? Nobody is able to tell us how great that pain must be. 3. The most welcome boon to a lost soul, would be to kill and destroy it. To pacify the just anger of God having become plainly impossible, the thought of death would then

be a relief:—but no : as long as God lives, so long will live the unhappy souls in hell, and ever and again will commence their dreadful torments.

Have we now learned something of the pains of hell? have we now seen how great an evil is one mortal sin, if it brings forth so bitter a fruit? and if so indeed, what do we imagine will be the fruit of the seed we have sown in our own lives? have not we perhaps committed that sin; and if we have, how many times, and how often might we not have been plunged into hell? Oh, dreadful are the judgments of God, and severe His justice: to be for ever cast out from His presence, to be for ever delivered up to the power of the evil spirit—such are the wages of sin. But we have always believed these truths. Yes,—and for that very reason we are doubly to blame. We have believed with the Catholic Church, that one mortal sin was enough to separate us for ever from Jesus, enough to make us lose God for ever, enough to send us to hell for ever and ever; and yet how many amongst us have gone on without fear, blindly and madly—committing sin after sin? Oh, is not this blindness without example? He that has fallen into mortal sin, let him then turn to God and say, “O Jesus! I have sinned, it is true, and thus

deserved to lose Thee: but take not Thy mercy from me. I repent, I repent from the bottom of my heart. I might have been even now in hell: but Thou hast spared me. O good Jesus, I will never sin again, should it cost me my life and more. I desire to behold Thee face to face in Thy kingdom, and there I am determined to come through all troubles and temptations. O Jesus, grant me grace never more to commit a mortal sin."

And now, let us turn to Mary the Virgin Mother of Jesus, and demand her powerful protection against this great evil—sin. As we think of the flames of hell, there is nothing in truth we should not do in this life to avoid so shocking a fate, no labour we should not undergo, no help we should not enlist on our behalf. But who can help us better than Mary? who can fight better for us against the devil? who is more pleasing to God, and who will sooner be heard by Him? Let us be devout to Our Blessed Lady, and if we have been so before, let us now redouble our devotion, that by continued prayer on our part she may obtain for us the grace never more to sin, and so avert the dreadful calamity of hell and its torments.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN.

There is no place in the world more justly celebrated for its devotion to Our Blessed Lady, than Rome. The Eternal City possesses no less than forty-six different churches dedicated to the honour of Mary, the largest and most beautiful of which is the Church of St. Mary Major. In Rome there scarcely exists a street, or even a single house, that does not boast at least of one image or picture of Our Blessed Lady, and not unfrequently of many more. A light is always burning before them : and, on feast days, several. The devotion of the Roman people to Mary is very affecting, and quite striking to visitors. They seem never to have forsaken her, even in times of trouble and revolution ; and she, in her turn, has without doubt protected them in a wonderful manner, averting sickness and plague, and restoring peace after civil disorders. In the Church of St. Mary Major's is preserved the crib, which held Our Blessed Lord at Bethlehem : and nothing can exceed the beauty and devotion of the scene when, before the midnight Mass at Christmas, the sacred crib is carried processionally in its case of gold and silver, and exposed to the veneration

of the faithful. In the same church there is also the original likeness of Our Blessed Lady, painted by St. Luke, which always claims its flock of worshippers. Let us go there to-day, and following the example of the devout people of Rome, who drink daily the waters of the Faith from the Rock of Peter, let us say a prayer in spirit before the picture of Our Blessed Lady, in the Church of St. Mary Major, Rome.

PRAYER OF ST. ANDREW OF CANDIA.

I salute thee, O full of grace ! O Mary, if I place my confidence in thee, I shall be saved. If I am under thy protection, I have nothing to fear:.....I implore thee then, O holy Virgin, to grant me the help of thy prayers with God ; prayers, which are dearer and more precious to us than all the treasures of the earth ; prayers, which render God propitious to us in our sins, and obtain us a great abundance of graces, both for the pardon of our offences, and the practice of virtue, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Eighth Day.

ON THE PAINS OF "SENSE" IN HELL.

MEDITATION.

WE must not cease to examine the punishment prepared by God for mortal sin, without considering the pain of "Sense" in hell. We reflected in our last meditation on the dreadful torments, which are produced in a condemned soul by the pain of "Loss:" but, it is not to be forgotten, that these are accompanied by other most terrible sufferings, working on the mind through the senses of man.

That we may allow this truth to impress itself more forcibly upon the understanding, after the example of King Ezechias, let us picture to our imagination the scene which the prison of hell presents even now at this moment. "I have said, in the midst of my days, I will go to the gates of hell."* Let us suppose, that for some good reason or other, perhaps through the prayers of our guardian angel, Almighty God has allowed us, as He allowed St. Teresa, to visit hell. And let us fancy that we are now standing upon a lofty hill, in the middle of a dark night,

and that by the power which God has given us, we are looking down through the darkness into the very centre of hell, which opens out its dread expanse in the valley beneath. There lies before us an immense lake of burning fire, foaming and lashing itself about with inconceivable fury. So great is the extent of this lake, that no man is able to measure it: yet upon all sides are visible, black impenetrable rocks, which rise up around like the walls of a fortress, and which present so dismal an aspect, as to preclude all hope of escape from the dreadful fire within. This sea of fire is composed of some dark and loathsome substance: brimstone it may be, or whatever else our minds may imagine it. It is never quiet, but always restless, rolling in all directions, and kept in continual motion by the breath of the vengeance of Almighty God for ever passing over it. Into this frightful dungeon have been hurled all those, who from the beginning of the world have died in mortal sin.

In order to make ourselves more surely masters of the subject we are meditating upon, let us try to fix our attention upon the sufferings, not of the many, but of one only among those lost ones. Who can describe the tortures which he is now enduring, the awful agonies and pains, com-

pared to which the infirmities of this life are in truth laughable? See how, in the very words of holy Scripture, he is “delivered to the torturers,”* who with a fiendish malice are tearing him and tormenting him—the fire the while burning into his vitals. Fire, and nought but fire, circles itself round that unfortunate being. The head, the eyes, the mouth, the hair, are all on fire: the arms, the feet, the back, the breast, are covered all over with fire: his whole body is one mass of fire, like a piece of iron taken red hot from the furnace. Whatever he touches is fire. And yet more, the fire is inside as well as out. Worse still: the fire is not content with the body, but, by the permission of God, it penetrates even to his soul: it fastens on his understanding, it rends in pieces his memory and will—the entire powers of his soul are enveloped in this woful fire. If we place but one member of our body, an arm or a foot, into the fire—what insufferable pain is the consequence! what must it not be then to burn, not in one limb, but in every part of the body and soul at the same time!

And what is the fire of hell? not such as we see in this world, beautiful and bright, conveying warmth and cheering us, and

* St. Matthew, xviii. 34.

adapting its various capacities to our every want. The fire of hell is dark, horrible, and filthy, with no agreeable or goodly influence, created solely for torture and pain—the fire of eternal punishment. St. Thomas assures us that the smallest degree of pain produced by this fire is greater than all the pains of martyrdom, greater than all the sufferings which disease or misfortune may bring about in this life: and if a passing spasm in the body, such as the decay of a tooth, causes such dreadful agony—if people have been driven almost mad, through a little straw having got into one of their eyes—who, think we, can rightly imagine what it is to endure a whole crowd of disorders and pains inflicted together upon a poor lost one in hell!

O dreadful fire of hell, which burns not by chance or at intervals: but continuously, and without intermission, without relief, without hope of comfort or mercy! Here on earth, every sickness, every pain, has its moments of alleviation: but in hell, never, never. Could any person bear to lie on the softest bed for a whole night, in one position, without changing? What then must it be, to find one's self, after thousands of years, still rooted to the same spot, where the same terrible torments have never ceased, with unremitting energy, to tear and

worry the unfortunate sufferer in hell! Oh, may we not say with the prophet Isaias, “which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you can dwell with everlasting burnings?”*

There must be added to our considerations on the fire of hell, that also of the other indescribable torments, which assault, through the senses, those who are damned. The most disgusting stench surrounds them. Their eyes meet with nothing but objects so revolting, that the most loathsome sights in this world are beautiful in comparison. Their ears ever listening to the most frightful blasphemies and curses, to furious howls and wailing most lamentable, and perhaps to the biting reproaches of those whose damnation has been brought about by their sins, such as a parent, or mayhap their own children, and this for all eternity! And then, as if nothing should be wanting to complete the full meed of suffering, there will be ever this maddening thought racking the brain of a lost soul—“I might have been saved,” will each one exclaim to himself, “and now I am lost, lost for ever.” Oh, how will not all the valuable opportunities of the life he mis-spent rise up then in judgment against him, the fostering care of his parents, the good instructions he

* Isaias, xxxiii. 14.

received, the fervour of his companions, the pious books he read, the example he had, the many sermons he listened to, the inspirations God gave him, the Masses he heard, the sacraments he frequented, all the graces bestowed upon him, and refused to others—but which he despised and neglected, till it was too late. How often had he not heard the joys of heaven set forth, and the punishment of hell explained and described to him, just as he now feels it; but he heeded not, and now he is lost, and lost for ever. Oh, so terrible a state can no man on earth conceive. But we may imagine in some way the writhing and agony, with which his despairing mind will be forced to remember the precious occasions allowed for saving his soul, and how he would not take them, but went on always in sin, cursing and swearing, breaking the Lord's Day, perhaps blaspheming the doctrines of the Catholic Church, impure, hateful, passionate and proud, committing every sin in the face of God. And how patiently did that good God bear with him, and how long, till it was past endurance. The sentence, therefore, is most just. But, what a horrid fate!

Here then, we have some slight conception of the torments, inflicted through the senses in hell: but after all, say what one

may, it is but a representation, a picture, and that but a poor one. Who can depict in their true colours, or describe in adequate language, the direful pains and punishment of the damned? And for ourselves, what are we to think of them? As Catholics, we have always firmly believed these truths. But how have we lived? Probably, as though there existed no hell at all. We have committed perhaps sins without number, and have truly deserved hell a thousand times. How many of us might now be there, had not God, as we hope, dealt out to us a merciful pardon. We trust that with the sorrow we now have for our sins, God *has* forgiven us. We may sin again, however, and mortally too, and perchance die in our sins, and then be damned. So it is: for although the sin be forgiven, who can say that his disposition to sin is so dead, that he may not sin again? It is quite true then, that we may commit mortal sin once more, and that one sin may be just one too many, and we may be lost for ever for it. What must we do, to prevent so dire a calamity to our souls as the eternal flames of hell? What *can* we do, in our sinfulness and nothingness, but turn our eyes towards heaven and beg for mercy. "O Jesus Christ," we should cry, "our God, our Redeemer, our all, do not abandon us. We

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have sinned, it is true, and deeply; but think on Thy sacred wounds, on Thy pains and sorrows suffered for our sake, on Thy Precious Blood which flowed for us. Remember, O Lord, the loving patience, the goodness with which Thou didst bear so long with us, the many times Thou didst forgive us, when Thou mightest with justice have cast us into hell. Must all this patient love and mercy go for nothing? Yet it must, if Thou dost not now take pity on us. Turn, then, O Jesus, in very compassion, Thy fatherly eyes towards us, spare Thy creatures once more, and bestow on us Thy grace, that we may never see in very deed those dreadful flames upon which we have this day meditated. And Mary, O sinless Virgin, full of grace, forget us not, though poor sinners we be. Faithfully believing all the Church sanctions with respect to thy wonderful patronage, we know that thou both canst, and art willing to help us. But still more, we feel that, as to enjoy thy presence and sit beside thee in heaven, is the next greatest reward to seeing and enjoying God Himself, so in proportion will thy loss be felt by those, who are doomed for ever to hell." O fatal loss, to lose the "Refuge of Sinners" in that awful place of punishment, never to see her who has helped us so often here on earth, and when

all things around bode desolation and grief, never more to be able to look up for protection and mercy to her who was always the "Help of Christians."—"O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Blessed Lord, that we may never experience so great a loss, do thou but look down upon us, and after this our exile ended, do thou show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb—Jesus."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Let us transport ourselves to-day in spirit to the noble city of Madrid, the capital of that fine old Catholic country, Spain. And after admiring the churches, which the true Faith has there erected to Mary, let us stray for a moment outside the walls, to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Atocha. This is one of the oldest sanctuaries that exist of all those, which have been dedicated by the Christian religion to the honour of the Mother of God: and so ancient is the image therein venerated, that some have supposed it to be the gift of St. Peter himself, whilst all agree, that it is at least coeval with the celebrated Council of Ephesus, held in the fifth century, against those who had impiously denied that Mary was the Mother of God.

The veneration for Our Lady of Atocha, may therefore well be said to date from the very cradle of Christianity. The image has always been held in the highest reverence by the Spanish people ; and the Spanish sovereigns of every age have evinced their love and respect, by a wonderful accumulation of gifts and presents. The kings of Castille were especially devout to this holy sanctuary : and it is an historical fact, that no monarch of Spain has ever dared to undertake a voyage or any enterprise of importance, without first praying at Our Lady's sanctuary of Atocha : and on their return, they never failed to go and thank her. In like manner, when the State has been in danger, through any untoward event : as of late years, when the Queen of Spain went solemnly to Atocha to give thanks, and to make her offerings, on the occasion of her life having been attempted by an assassin. Let us in an humble way imitate such glorious devotion, and join the noble Spanish people in venerating Our Blessed Lady, at her sanctuary of Atocha near Madrid.

PRAYER OF ST. ILDEPHONSUS, ARCHBISHOP OF
TOLEDO.

I come to thee, O Mother of God, and
implore thee to obtain for me the pardon

of my sins, and that I may be cleansed from those of my whole life. I beseech thee to procure for me the grace to unite myself in affection with thy Son, and with thyself; with thy Son as my God, and with thee as the Mother of my God. Amen.

Fifth Day.

ON ETERNITY IN HELL.

MEDITATION.

OUR Blessed Saviour has asked us a question, which every one ought often to ask himself. "What," He says, "doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"* The answer is contained in the meditations, which we have made on the pains of hell. The soul that is damned, is cast out from God, and burns in hell for all eternity:—such is the profit gained by a man who loses his soul. But what is eternity? What does it mean, how does it affect a lost soul? This is what no one can fully tell us. And yet eternity is fast approaching. Let us see then, whether we cannot learn at least something concerning this great and awful mystery. O eternity, eternity! short word

* St. Matthew, xvi. 26.

as it is, how much is contained within its dread embrace! What terrible realities, and what frightful forebodings, start up when there is question of eternity in hell!

First, then, we must remember that eternity has no end. Thousands of years may roll by, as many thousands as there are leaves upon the trees of the earth—as many as there are drops in all the oceans, rivers, and all the waters put together—as many as there are grains of sand by the sea shore: and after this, what will it be? Eternity! The half of eternity will not have been passed over, nor the hundredth part, nor yet the thousandth. Eternity begins again, and will last so much more: and still it will go on a thousand times as long, yea a ten thousand and a million times as long. And after all this shall have gone by, the hundredth part of eternity is not yet accomplished, nor the thousandth—there is as yet nothing done. The unfortunate souls that are damned to hell, have been burning and enduring unknown torments all this long while, and now they must commence their sufferings anew! O mystery of all mysteries! O, of all thoughts, most fearful! Eternity! who is able to comprehend it?

Let us descend, as we have done before, spiritually into hell, and contemplate the

state of one of those lost souls suffering there. Let us take Judas. Suppose it to be the lot of Judas, to shed one tear in every thousand years: and now behold that fallen apostle—already he has been near two thousand years in hell, and as yet he has not shed his second tear. What an immense number of years must still roll on, before he can fill one small river with his tears! But who can count the time which must pass, before his tears can mount so high as the waters of the deluge, before they can fill up every town and city, and cover the very mountains, before they can occupy the entire space between the earth and the sun. The distance between the earth and the sun is ninety-five millions of miles. What a tremendous number of years would be necessary to accomplish such a task! And yet—O great mystery! incomprehensible but true, true as that God Himself is truth—and yet a time would come, when the tears of Judas might have overflowed the whole earth, when they might have reached up to the very heavens, and still more, when these very tears might have been dried up again one by one, and when Judas, notwithstanding, must begin to weep again and to fill up the weary space as if he had never shed one tear. And this he might do hundreds,

thousands, and millions of times : and what then will it be? Eternity ! The half of eternity has not passed, nor any part of it—nothing has passed. The fallen angels, Cain, Judas, all those who have been condemned to hell from the creation of the world, how long have they not burned in the dreadful flames ! But now, this very instant, they must begin to burn afresh, as if they had but just entered there.

In eternity, there is no pause. Hence the miserable souls in hell, cannot so much as comfort themselves with the hope of a little ease or refreshment. The gates of hell are shut against all this. Hope is a beguilement to every evil. There is no toil or suffering, which the possession of hope does not make tolerable. The most afflicted persons in this life are ever alive with the expectation that their miseries will end or change : but that solace is denied to the damned, whose wretchedness will never come to an end, and whose torments will never alter. What a priceless happiness would they not esteem it, if it were announced to them, that at some definite period, say thousands of years distant, a single drop of water—the drop that the rich man asked through Lazarus—should be dealt out to each of the souls in hell. Yet not this even shall they obtain : and

after so many millions of years, those unhappy souls shall still be enduring the same tortures of body and mind, and as much devoid of alleviation as ever. O terrible eternity! for when a damned soul shall perceive that all relief and all hope of change is impossible, then it is that his heart will be rent asunder with rage and despair at the horrible fate before him.

To enforce this more strongly, let us imagine that we are looking at some particular place in hell, and that in that place are enclosed three of the damned. The first is swallowed up in a sea of sulphur, which suffocates him, and from which he is endeavouring vainly to extricate himself. The second is chained to a piece of rock, and is being tormented by two demons, one of which pours molten lead down his throat, whilst the other is sliming his body over with the same horrid material. The third is a prey to two monsters, in the shape of huge serpents: and whilst one, being wound about him, is gnawing his flesh and crunching his bones, the other creeps into his mouth, and tears his heart out. Let us suppose, if such could be, that Almighty God takes a little mercy on these three unfortunates, and orders, that every thousand years they should be freed for one hour from their agony, a drink of fresh

water given them, and that then they should be sent back to their punishment for another thousand years. What a poor consolation ! to suffer for a thousand years, and to rest but for one hour ! Nevertheless, not even this exists in hell. To burn in those flames, and to obtain no repose, and this for ever ! to be worried and torn by spiteful demons, to be lashed all round by ferocious serpents, to be covered all over with loathsome reptiles, to have no relief or ease, and for ever ! to be always enduring the most horrible thirst and hunger, and yet unable to eat or drink, and this for ever ! to be hated by God and by all His creatures for ever, to be cast out of heaven, and cursed into hell, for ever, for ever, and for ever—such, though feebly we conceive it, yet portrays to us in some way the awful truth of Eternity in hell.

Here then, we have hell and its terrors before us. We see that it is a place of ceaseless mourning, a place of intense suffering, a place of gloomy despair, the very place where perhaps *we* might have been long ago, had not the wonderful charity of God preserved us from so great a misfortune. Oh, let us exclaim a thousand times, “the Sacred Heart of Jesus has loved us, otherwise we might now be in hell: the endless mercy of Jesus has spared us,

otherwise we might now be in hell: the Precious Blood of Jesus has procured grace and forgiveness for sin, otherwise at this very moment we might all be in hell." Let us never forget to repeat this, and to praise Jesus for all eternity. And what is there we ought not to do, to redeem the time we have lost? O that precious gift of Time! what would not a poor condemned soul give, but for one half-hour of those whole days and weeks, which men mis-spend in this life, to come back and do penance for their sins! what contrition would they not excite themselves to, in the brief space of that one half-hour, and where would the penance be, rude enough or fervent, with which they would not rend their hearts and crucify their bodies? what tears for the past: what thanks to God, for having given them that short time more: what a firm resolution for the future! "O Lord Jesus, we make that resolution now, namely, to die a hundred times rather than offend Thee again. O merciful Jesus, help us to keep our promise, and so to use the time still allowed us, that our Eternity, instead of being where our sins have so often deserved, may be passed with Thee in Thy kingdom."

And, in the midst of such thoughts, can we forget Our Blessed Lady? what con-

verted sinner *can* forget her? for if our hearts are now touched, and we start back afright at the punishment prepared for mortal sin, at the bare idea of eternity in hell, is it not certain that much, if not all, of this we owe to Mary? Has she not prayed for us? Doubtless she has, at all times; but particularly during this most sweet month of hers. Mary is, indeed, the Gate of heaven, which she is ever opening to poor penitent sinners: also, because Almighty God has so disposed that all graces should pass through her hands. And exercising this privilege in regard to us, what graces and blessings has she not showered upon us! whilst we have been pondering over our sins, these last few days, and praying for pardon, Mary has looked on and carried our prayer to the throne of her Divine Son; and in return we have had sorrowing hearts, and minds full of a wholesome fear of God. Oh, how good Our Lady has been to us. “Mother of Our Redeemer,” we should often cry, “continue evermore so to pray; and may thy holy intercession procure for us that, which our sins do not merit—the grace of final perseverance, and the happiness of meeting thee in heaven, who on earth hast been our protector.”

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN.

Amongst the Sanctuaries of Our Lady in Italy, scarcely any is better known than that called "La Consolata" at Turin. It dates its origin mainly from the twelfth century, and was founded in consequence of some extraordinary prodigies and miracles wrought at the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. This Sanctuary has always been much frequented, and the sovereign and people of the country have been ever foremost in the love and honour displayed towards it. The princes of the house of Savoy have not been less zealous than other Catholic Sovereigns, in their devotions to Mary; and Duke Charles Emmanuel chose, in 1669, Our Lady della Consolata as the patroness of his states. For centuries, until lately, it was the custom of these princes to repair to the Sanctuary at certain times; and, naturally enough, so pious an example was well followed by their truly Catholic subjects. The people of Piedmont are quite as Catholic now as formerly: only, the sad persecution, which the Church endures there, is not unknown to us. Let us make up, by the fervour of a good spiritual visit to this once-favoured Sanctuary, for all that is actually wanting there in love and

respect for Mary. Let us especially pray to Our Lady della Consolata at Turin, to obtain from God that the veil which shrouds the hearts of the misguided men, who now rule that country, may be removed; and that so they may begin once more to fear God, and respect His Mother, as their fathers did of old.

PRAYER OF FATHER JAMES MERLO HORSTIUS.

O Mary, Mother of God, Virgin of all virgins, undefiled, without example, for ever blessed, temple most pleasing to God, sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, gate of the kingdom of heaven,—incline, O Mother of Mercy, the ear of thy goodness to mine unworthy supplications, and of thy clemency be thou a kindly helper to me, a miserable sinner, in every hour of need. Amen.

Centh Day.

ON THE PRACTICAL FRUIT TO BE DRAWN FROM THE PREVIOUS MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATION.

WE have now pretty well understood the terrible fate that awaits a soul, which, instead of keeping its last end in view, has lost it through sin. All this working of the understanding, however, and the pictures by which our memory and imagination have assisted us, are of no use whatever, unless the Will also is made to do its part. We must consequently make up our minds to set to work in such a manner as to preclude all chance of our falling into eternal misery, and thus losing the only end and aim of our life on earth. In other words, we must endeavour to draw practical fruit from our meditations.

The first fruit to be drawn from these meditations, is to endeavour to produce in our souls as perfect an act of contrition as possible for sin. Let every one therefore, search strictly his conscience, and say to himself—"How would it stand with me, if in one hour hence I were to appear before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ? Am I quite ready? Have my confessions been made so

sincerely and well, that I may trust my sins have been forgiven me? Is there nothing concealed in my heart, nothing about which I might well feel anxious? In short, am I ready to die this moment? Am I perfectly prepared to meet the face of my Judge?" Let us ever bear in mind that the first step which brings us nearer to God, the first approach to holiness, the first means towards interior peace, is to place our hearts, by contrition, in such a state as to feel ready to stand at a moment's warning before the tribunal of Almighty God. And whoever does not feel so, should lose no time in making a thoroughly good confession, with such exact a searching of the conscience, such a real and heartfelt sorrow, such candid and humble acknowledgments of sin, that when it is over he can safely say to to himself, "now I have done what God requires of me, for the pardon of my sins; and with the dispositions I am now in, I may appear fearlessly before Christ to be judged." What sweet comfort—what balm to the wounded soul, is such a confession: and what sure hope does it not give us of life eternal!

The second fruit to be obtained from our meditations, is to make satisfaction to God, as far as we are able, for our past sins. In order to move our wills to perform this, let

us turn once again to the scenes we have witnessed before ;—suppose that Almighty God were to send a ray of His heavenly light down into hell, and thus to address the unhappy Judas , “ Behold, for more than eighteen hundred years hast thou burned in hell ; I am now satisfied, and will extend mercy to thee ; but upon this condition, that immediately thou returnest to the world, and that there for a hundred years thou bearest in silence, and cheerfully, every sickness and infirmity, every pain and sorrow of mind and body, every insult and affront that has ever been heard of, or borne by any man on earth ; do this for the love of me, and I will forgive thee and will allow thee to enter heaven.” Oh, who can describe the joy that would light up the heart of Judas, as he heard this news ! “ O infinite goodness of God,” would he say in return ; “ O boundless mercy to me, gladly do I accept this condition, and will suffer cheerfully all the troubles of earth, which ever mortal endured—not for a hundred years, but for double and treble that time, if only I can obtain forgiveness, and see at last Thy face in heaven.” But that hour of grace shall never come for Judas. And now it is come for us. Is not the time, which God at present lends us, as great a gift—as infinite a mercy, as though he had actually drawn

us back out of hell? Truly is it: and with these thoughts upon us, let us resolve for the future to bear every cross and trial manfully and with joy, to endure all the troubles of our various positions in life with cheerfulness, and to undergo every pain and sorrow sent us, without murmur, for the love of God. One mortal sin deserves an eternal punishment: and the small sufferings of this world, what are they, compared to the everlasting flames of hell?

The third fruit which these meditations should bear us, is the earnest endeavour, on our part, to avoid all venial sins, especially those, the commission of which leads to mortal sin. It is not enough to determine rather to die, than to commit a mortal sin: a similar resolution should be made, with respect to venial sins: otherwise no man can be sure of himself. Nothing can indicate more to a certainty the salvation of individual souls, than a great watchfulness about venial sins, joined with a great zeal in spiritual things. To insure our eternal safety, we must become zealous in prayer, zealous in humility, zealous in the bearing of injuries, zealous in self-denial and mortification, zealous in the love of God, and the love of our neighbour; and whosoever would procure for himself this zeal and fervour, must take notice of the following:—1. He must try never to allow any

rash judgment, unjust suspicion, or contempt of his neighbour to remain an instant in his mind. 2. He must fight with great perseverance against all temptations to anger and impatience, returning again and again to the struggle, if unsuccessful at first. 3. He must never allow himself to entertain for a moment any feeling of hatred or undue dislike to any person, no matter how much they may have injured him, always being ready to forgive and forget. 4. He must not permit any inordinate love to usurp his soul, shunning, with fear and trembling, the smallest approach to unclean thoughts. 5. He must be very careful never to go to the Sacraments without due preparation, or lazily to omit his thanksgiving after holy Communion. 6. He must endeavour to support all troubles and misfortunes with the utmost resignation, and a spirit of perfect submission to the will of God, never grumbling or murmuring, but taking all with equal joy from His holy hand. All this, and much more we might mention, is only to avoid venial sin. And now the question comes hard upon us—can we make up our minds to strain every nerve to do this or not? if not, the preceding meditations are of little use to us, we shall never advance one single step in the interior life, we shall never obtain true

peace of mind, above all, we shall never attain to that state, in which we might readily meet with death at a moment's notice. We may hope, however, to be able to arrive at this determination. Let us turn, then, to Jesus, and say: "O Lord Our God, Who wast crucified for us, Thou hast now given us light enough to see what it is to lose Thee eternally. We acknowledge that we can never be sure of enjoying Thy presence in heaven, as long as we do not give ourselves entirely to Thee, so as to be willing to die rather than commit the least sin. Thou art our only end and aim in this life, and should it cost us every suffering this world has heard of, even death itself a thousand times, we are resolved to gain Thee and possess Thee in the life to come. O Jesus teach us to do Thy will."

The great St. Bernard was wont to remind himself of his last end by constantly repeating to himself these words—"O Bernard, Bernard, wherefore camest thou here?" and St. Bernard was the faithful servant of Mary. Who can doubt, that his great devotion to the Mother of God procured him countless graces, amongst others that of keeping always before him that man was created for the sole purpose of loving and serving God, and by such

means of saving his soul? Let us pray then fervently to Mary. "Mother of Him Who created us, look down upon us from thy bright throne above. Thou didst always keep thy great end before thee, and therefore art thou now in glory. We have sinned, and lost sight of our great end; but now we have found it again. Rejoice with us at so happy a recovery; but pray, pray likewise that we may ever avoid all sin, mortal and venial, and that our souls may be so reduced to the service and love of God, as to be quite ready and prepared should sudden death surprise us. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

One of the most celebrated of the Sanctuaries, which Catholic France has erected to the honour of the Mother of God, is without doubt that known as Notre Dame de la Garde at Marseilles. The Sanctuary stands in the suburbs of that city, upon a hill which slopes down into the sea. Nothing can be more beautiful or truly grand than the position it occupies, and the view from the summit of the mountain which holds it, is magnificent. The rich town of Marseilles, with its port and immense population on the one side, farther on a

noble tract of country, and on the other the full expanse of the deep blue Mediterranean. Of a truth, the people of Marseilles have known how to honour Mary. It was in the year 1214 that this Sanctuary was founded, in a modest way at first, but with the lapse of time, offerings and devotions increased. By degrees, Our Lady de la Garde became one of the richest Sanctuaries known, and continued so till the epoch of the old French Revolution, when, amid the other spoils of the Church, the great silver image of Our Lady, adorned with many ornaments, was taken away and destroyed. But the piety of Marseilles has not decayed, and, with times of peace, have returned the votive offerings of the faithful. A superb statue of silver has again been placed there, and sumptuous gifts are never wanting. How the people of Marseilles love and reverence Our Lady de la Garde! and well they may, for she sits there like a queen upon her hill, protecting them from troubles by land, and dangers by sea. The sailors, as they return from their voyages, may be seen on the decks of their vessels saluting their Mother as they pass into port; and not unfrequently do they repair, on landing, to return thanks at Notre Dame de la Garde. So again with every one in that city. Mothers instruct their children, and

all learn to love Our Lady. Let us go there likewise, and learn to love her. We may be strangers in Marseilles ; but Catholics are at home wherever there is a Catholic church, the Blessed Sacrament, and Mary. Let us pray together, spiritually, in that sweet and goodly Sanctuary.

PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM.

O immaculate and entirely pure Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Queen of the universe, our own good Lady ! thou art above all the saints, the only hope of the patriarchs, and the joy of the blessed. Through thee have we been reconciled to Our God ; thou art the only advocate of sinners, and the secure haven of those who are sailing on the sea of this life ; thou art the consolation of the world, the ransom of captives, the joy of the sick, the comfort of the afflicted, the refuge, the salvation of the whole world. . . . We beseech thee to prevent thy Son, irritated by our sins, from abandoning us to the power of the devil. Amen.

Eleventh Day.

ON THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

MEDITATION.

HITHERTO we have been sorrowing for sin; and as the thought of the fearful malice which sin contains struck forcibly upon us, we determined to avoid sin, to love God from our whole hearts, and to seek Him henceforth as the only object in life. Being weak, however, and not knowing the way to heaven, nor yet the dangers of the road that leads there, we must now begin to look about us a little more, and perceive what we are trying to do, and what instruments we have to work with. Nothing is more important than this consideration: for what will it avail us to know that we are sinners, to discover that we have lost sight of the true end of our existence, or that an awful punishment is prepared for sin, unless we learn how to remedy it all? In truth, many times have we heard these things before, and perhaps also, the impression they made, however little, has had its effect; we may have been more on our guard, and have gained some few victories; but how soon the good spirit wore away, and how easily betimes, after a few

resistances, did we not relapse into the very same sins. And why? Because, although we knew this life was a warfare, we yet never began to fight in earnest; and this again, 1. because we have never clearly seen the nature of the fight: perhaps have never been aware that there was a fight at all; 2. because we have never sufficiently understood who the combatants are, or cared to know the commander under whose standard we are fighting. We must therefore beg for the assistance of Almighty God to enable us to learn, by means of a parable, all that is requisite for us in regard of this.

Let us imagine to ourselves some great and good king, who rules over some powerful nation, and who is making preparations for a war which he is about to undertake. Having advised with himself, he proclaims his sovereign will to all his subjects. He invites them to come with him to the war. "Come," he says, "and follow me." And immediately, he begins to tell them all they will have to suffer in this war. "Their enemy is no common one; they will have to march all the day, with but little rest by night; they will have to endure much hunger and thirst, for the country through which they are to pass is barren, and the provisions scarce; great burdens will be

laid upon them, and accoutrements of heavy weight; the war may be long and severe, and the labours will doubtless be many and hard to bear." This account startles and appals them at first: but the cause is so just, and the war of such importance, and their king so loving and good, that one and all, with the greatest enthusiasm, they rush unhesitatingly to enlist in the arduous service. And good indeed is their king: for whilst they flock to his standard, what does he? "The hardships are great and numerous," he says to them: "but think not that I lay these on you, to carry of yourselves. Think not, whilst you fight for me, that I shall remain at home with ease. I will go with you to the war, and when a battle commences, I will descend into the very thickest of the fight, and there, when least expected, you will find me helping you each one individually in the midst of your struggles. I will suffer everything with you, even more than any of you, so that no one, as he looks upon me, will have a right to complain. And besides this, I will provide such a wonderful means of support and assistance, that will astonish those that taste of it. You will thirst; but I will give you living water. You will hunger; but I will give you food that this world knows not of. You will be worn out with

fatigue, toils, and disease; but I possess a remedy that will cure all sickness, and restore the strength of your wearied limbs."

The subjects of this good king listen to his speech, and their souls are fired by it. At once they join with the invitation, they will be his soldiers, his servants, his very slaves—anything will they be, to fight for such a master. Hardships are nothing to them in such a cause; the labour is light, and as for long marches, and the consequent fatigue, what care they, when their king is ready to refresh and restore them? and thus they go forth to battle.

But as in imagination we see them winding their way over mountain, over valley, over rough roads and smooth, pursuing their journey in sunshine and storm, or betimes engaging manfully with the enemy, —supposing that one of these soldiers, or several, were to grow faint and weary through marching, to become fearful, and to lay down their arms and run away, or more truly, to go over to the enemy (for he who is not *with* this king must fight *against* him), what should we call them? what name should we give them? Is there any epithet too opprobrious, dastard, coward, or what not, by which we might not designate such traitors?

And now, let us simply apply this parable to the kingdom of Christ on earth.

Our Lord comes down from heaven to dwell amongst us. He calls us together—for we are His subjects—and communicates His divine Will to us, which is to subdue and conquer the kingdom of His mortal enemy, the devil. He summons us to help Him, not in the harsh and overbearing manner of a tyrant, but in the kindest and most loving of ways.

The enemies, He tells us, we are to fight against are—1. the devil, and all his works and pomps; 2. the world, the deadly foe of Christ—(“My kingdom,” He declares, “is not of this world:” therefore, the world is against Him, or His enemy,) 3. the flesh, and all the evil propensities of our fallen nature.

Nor are we less informed about all that we have to suffer. Contradictions without number, inducements to anger, excitements to lust and intemperance, impure imaginations, all the temptations which arise from avarice and the love of pleasure. Allurements again from evil companions, the contagion of bad conversation, first listened to unwillingly, then indulged in. Further, the reproaches or the scoffs of irreligious people, perchance of our own friends and elations, insults from the world, at home,

in the streets, in our open foes or our secret enemies, the undutiful conduct of children, or the scandalous behaviour of parents. Then, that other class of miseries, the offspring of sin in our bodies, such as cold, hunger, and sickness, and everything that poverty and wretchedness entail upon poor mortals. These are the hardships of our war, which is to be conducted against a wary and skilful general, well acquainted with all the wiles and stratagems of his art. And upon this undertaking have we all entered, when we became Christians—all, no one excepted.

But what does Christ Our Lord? “You have not chosen me,” He says, “but I have chosen you.”* “As a father, therefore, tends his children, so shall I tend you. I will fill you with My grace, to comfort and strengthen you. When you ask for anything, you shall receive it, on the sole condition that you remain faithful to Me. When you are tempted to anger and pride, you shall look to Me for an example, you shall ‘learn of Me to be meek and humble of heart,’† and to take the last place. You shall think how kind and charitable I am, how prudent and shortspoken, a man of few words. When you are insulted, you shall call to mind how I was persecuted and

* St. John, xv. 16.

† St. Matt. xi. 29.

abused, and that at the very moment I was doing good to Mine enemies; when you remember this, you will not complain. Still more, hunger and cold, and all the miseries of your poverty, will come thick upon you: but while you suffer them, think you I shall remain at home in comfort? Oh, no. I will descend amongst you, I will be a poor man like you, I will lie on straw in the winter's frost, I will become a carpenter's son, and work for My bread, which will often be scanty. I shall be poorly clad, and sometimes without the necessities of life. I shall hunger so, that My own disciples shall be forced to rub the ears of corn in their hands for food. And as for my bed, you shall see that 'the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.'* And, lastly," exclaims Our Blessed Lord, "the devil, against whom you are going to fight, will tempt you, perhaps, more than all, with the pleasures of the flesh. He will represent the world as a place of enjoyment, the delights of which are unequalled; he will seek to attach you to it, to chain you to it. But, O My children, when thus you are tempted, look to Me, your teacher and example: I committed no sin, neither was guile found

* St. Luke, ix, 58.

in My mouth; and yet, did I not fast and pray, did I not watch, did I not labour and travail, did I not deliver myself to My persecutors to be scourged and maltreated?" In such language does Our Blessed Lord, Our King, address us His subjects, when He calls upon us to follow Him to the war.

But His address comes not harshly or severely, but in those sweet loving accents—"Follow Me:" for "he that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life;" * or if we grow languid and careworn, with much trouble of body and mind, He bids us to "come to Him" we that labour and are burthened, and "He will refresh us."†

Let us allow this to penetrate deeply into our hearts. Let us ask Our Blessed Lord, to give us light to see His truth, and grace to embrace His cause; and if with such spirit we enter into this warfare, then shall every complaint, every murmur disappear. When insulted, we shall bear it cheerfully, and for the love of Christ; when stricken with poverty, in reverses and trials, we shall run to Christ for help; when tempted impurely, or to indulge too freely in worldly pleasures, we shall derive strength and grace to resist them from the thought of all Christ suffered for us. Oh, this is to belong to the

* St. John. viii. 12.

† St. Matthew, xi. 28.

kingdom of Christ; this is to "follow Him"—"to fight with Him" in earnest and in truth. May we then resolve forthwith to act upon such feelings, sincerely and generously to relinquish every evil thought, word, or deed for His sake, and henceforth to fight fervently against His enemies, which are also ours.

"And Mary, Mother of Christ, thou who didst follow Christ's footsteps, bodily, as well as in spirit, deign to help thy poor suppliants here below. Thou art now in glory, reigning in heaven with thy Son: we are as yet poor journeyers on earth. But thou wert once, as we are now, wanderers in this vale of tears. Help us with thy prayers: for we desire nothing better than to follow thy Son, Our Lord, and to fight by His side, that instead of being traitors to His cause, having fought the good fight, we may, by His Precious Blood, and thine intercession, deserve to enter the land we are fighting for—the eternal land of promise. O Mary, remember us in thine own sweet month of May."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE

BLESSED VIRGIN.

At Venice, in the church of Santa Maria della Pace, there is an image of Our Blessed Lady, which has been held for centuries in

the highest veneration. The presence of this image has made a Sanctuary of the church ; and the history of the image is told in a few words. In the year 788, Saint John Damascene, who is celebrated for his strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin, had had his hand cut off by order of the Greek Emperor, Leo the Isaurian. But having prayed, with many tears, before an image of Our Lady, his hand was restored to him, and the Saint was perfectly cured. This same image was afterwards translated to Venice, in the year 1349, and placed in the church of Santa Maria della Pace. Devout worshippers are often seen at this shrine, which is much honoured, especially in May: for Venice is very Catholic. In that town, Pius VII. was elected Pope ; and all those who love Mary should remember, that to his zeal and piety the Church owes much of the devotion peculiar to the month of May, if not the very institution itself. Mary loves Venice, doubtless, for such a Pontiff ; and let us, therefore, repair to her Sanctuary, and thank Our Blessed Lord for all the glory and devotion, which the Church has ever paid to His Mother.

PRAYER OF ST. JOHN DAMASCENE.

I salute thee, O Mary ! thou art the hope of Christians : receive the prayer of a sinner,

who loves thee tenderly, honours thee in a special manner, and places in thee the whole hope of his salvation. From thee I have my life. Thou dost reinstate me in the grace of thy Son: thou art the sure pledge of my salvation. I beseech of thee, therefore, to deliver me from the burthen of my sins: dispel the darkness of my mind, banish from my heart the love of the world, repress thou the temptations of mine enemies, and so rule my whole life, that by thy means, and under thy guidance, I may obtain everlasting happiness in heaven. Amen.

Twelfth Day.

ON FOLLOWING CHRIST.

MEDITATION.

WE have determined to detest and abhor sin; and further, we are now to proceed with Jesus Christ, Our Lord and King, to the war to which He invites us, indifferent amid all the hardships and obstacles we may encounter by the way. To do this, is nothing else than to "follow Christ," and to imitate Him. As St. Peter tells us, "Unto this you have been called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps."*

* 1 Peter, II. 21.

It is the will of God, that His creatures should serve Him in the manner that is proper and necessary for the eternal salvation of each ; and as the real end of man is the service and enjoyment of his Creator, so the imitation of Christ should be the essential object in the life of a Christian. A Christian should be "another Christ:" that is, his life and conduct should form a living representation of Christ Himself. But who can do this, without imitating Him? Consequently the imitation of Christ ought to be the main object of our lives.

Moreover, the following of Christ is most necessary, as the means of enabling us to obtain the great treasure we seek. "No one," as He Himself says, "can come to the Father unless by Me,"* that is, unless by imitating Him : for, continues our Blessed Lord, "I am the way, the truth and the life."† Let us then learn something about the imitation of Christ.

In the foregoing meditation, we represented to ourselves how Our divine Lord has come upon earth as the restorer of the kingdom of His heavenly Father, which had been laid waste by the devil and his agents. And what a noble mission was that! the heritage of God given over to devastation by mortal sin, the gates of heaven

* St. John, xiv. 6.

† St. John, xiv. 6.

closed upon us, no human being to have been able to enter paradise, and then the Son of God becoming man to save us ! Where is there a higher end or aim, than the glory of God, and the salvation of souls ? and such was Christ's mission : and in His work shall we all have part, if we but imitate Christ.

But see the conditions, under which Our Blessed Lord demands our services in His cause. A king of this world sits at home ; and when there is work to do attended with labour and much hardship, he does not work in person, but sends his servants and ministers to perform it. How different with Christ Our Lord ! " I will not," He exclaims, " that my subjects who follow Me, be worse lodged or more scantily clothed, than I : they shall not work more, or have less to eat and drink, than I : they shall not endure greater hardships, than I : they shall not suffer first, for I will go before, that they may follow." O wonderful terms, upon which we are all called upon to enlist in the army of Christ ! Jesus is innocent ; we are guilty : Jesus is the Creator and Lord of all ; we are the dust of the earth : Jesus dwells in heaven, and where might our abode have been ? and nevertheless, so good, so loving is Jesus, that He wills not that we should labour more, or endure more, than He

labours and endures. He only asks us to follow Him.

And is it not easy to follow Christ? oh, truly is it easy: for He has said to us, "Take My yoke upon you, and you shall find rest for your souls." Hence, whatever the hardships of our warfare, "His yoke is sweet, and His burthen light,"* and they ever bring with them interior peace, and a solace unknown elsewhere. The life of Our Blessed Lord on earth was not all suffering: it had also its joys and consolations. At Bethlehem, He was driven, it is true, into a poor mean stable: but then at the same time, the angels came down from heaven, with gladsome words, to announce His glory and our salvation. In the wilderness, the evil spirit tempted Him: but the angels came likewise there to minister unto Him. When preaching, He was often despised and insulted: but then, on Thabor He was glorified and transfigured. And even thus is it with those, who try to follow Christ. The labour is great, and there is much to suffer: but in the same manner as the sorrows endured by Christ on earth, were not without their moments of peace and happiness, so is sweet joy infused into the hearts of men, long conversant with the unsatisfying pleasures of this world, when they turn to

* St. Matthew, xl. 29, 30.

follow Christ, and enrol themselves in those ranks of untroubled order, the army of blessedness and peace. To be near to Jesus is always sweet: to live away from Him is bitterness indeed: and if a drop of comfort falls from heaven, to sustain us in this vale of tears, of a truth it falls upon the heart of him who follows Christ.

Then, to think what it will be to meet Him in Paradise, Whom we have followed faithfully here below! Imagine Our Blessed Lord appearing in a vision, heavily laden with His Cross. He looks lovingly towards us, and in the same instant the clouds of heaven open, and disclose, amidst thousands and millions of the chosen ones of God, certain seats and thrones of surpassing beauty, the like of which has never been seen. Then Christ says to us, "Behold, these are the seats prepared for you, which you will possess for ever, if only you will follow Me on earth a few years longer." Oh, if Christ spoke thus to us, how soon should we not follow Him! and would not such a promise help and comfort us, through all our troubles? But our Faith assures us, that He has so spoken. We know that a heavenly throne, an everlasting kingdom does await him who follows Christ. Why then cannot faith accomplish in us, what such a vision might? O we of little faith.

Once more : Christ Our Lord, being God, is infinitely wise, infinitely true, infinitely good and loving to man. He loves us all : and what pleasure could it, therefore, be to Him, to torment us and make us suffer, even here? Neither could it be, nor is it any pleasure. What learn we then from this? That if it were possible to find an easier or less toilsome road to heaven than the way of the Cross, Our loving Lord would surely have found it for us. But God in His wisdom has seen, that the road of pleasure and indulgence must needs be fraught with sin and everlasting misery : therefore, does He point out to us the rough and narrow way, which He Himself has travelled, and where He invites us to join Him. Oh, let us pause a moment, and converse thus with our souls. There are two places in the universe, the duration of which is never-ending. One of these is called heaven : the other is called hell. And there is a road to each of these places : but only *one* road to each. That road which is so broad and pleasant, and along which are passing so many millions of men — *that* road is the road to hell. The other is very strait and narrow, full of briars and thorns, rough and ungainly in all conscience : but upon that road, we see Christ Our Lord accompanied by a small handful

of chosen followers, walking courageously along—and *that* road is the road to heaven. How great and important a truth is this! Only that road, which is trodden by Christ, leads to heaven: and this is the Eternal Truth, which Christ Himself proclaimed. "No one cometh to the Father, unless through Me,"* that is, "No one cometh to heaven, unless by the road which I Myself have travelled." And now, let us look to ourselves. What road have we been taking? perhaps, but too truly, the broad road which leads to perdition. When we review our past life, what little consolation there! We may have been adoring Jesus, as Our God and Redeemer: but how few of us have tried to imitate Him! Have we not disbelieved rather His very words? for when He told us that "His yoke was sweet and His burden light," have we not considered the virtues and obligations, to practise and to fulfil which is to bear His yoke, have we not considered them too great a burden, and too heavy for our weakness? We were thus unwilling to share in the glorious work, for which Christ came upon earth: or we did injury to the wisdom of God, as if He were ignorant of our strength to bear them: or we doubted His goodness, as though He wished to impose too much

* St. John, xiv. 6.

on flesh and blood—forgetting the while, that he who will not go through the ordeal of the means, is not worthy of the end. Has such been the blindness of our past life, then let us change it: let us henceforth live as Christ lived, and travel the road that Christ went. “O Jesus, Our King, Our Leader: only go Thou before, and we will follow. Lead us through insults and scorn, through evil repute and calumnies, we yet will follow. Lead us through afflictions and misfortunes, we will follow. Lead us through every cross and trial this world has invented, through pains without number, through griefs of the mind, through poverty, misery, cold, and hunger; only lead us, only give us Thy grace, Thy help—whithersoever Thou goest, to the last we will cheerfully follow.”

In conclusion, think of Mary—how she followed Christ in all things! If her Son was born amid the snows of winter, did she not share His cold and misery? If thus early He was persecuted and “the most abject of men,”* did not a sevenfold grief pierce her soul? If He was lowly and despised at Nazareth, was she not the Mother that nursed and reared Him? When was He sorrowful, but Mary’s heart was full? When did He suffer, but she suffered with

* Isaiah, lili. 3.

Him? When did He begin to teach, but Mary listened and "kept all these words in her heart?"* And when all His friends abandoned Him, when on Calvary He hung as the last of men, insulted and blasphemed, who stood by the Cross of Jesus, but "Mary His Mother?" Oh, what enduring love for Jesus, what resolution to adhere to Him through all! Whether in honour, therefore, or dishonour, in joy or in sorrow, in a low station or as the Mother of the Prophet, the Preacher, the Worker of Miracles, from first to last the faithful follower of Christ was Mary. "Such devotion, such love, grant us, O Lord! through the prayers of Thy most holy Mother, that having endeavoured to follow Thee faithfully in this life, we may enjoy Thee for ever in the next."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Cordova, an ancient city of Spain, contains a well-known Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin, called "Our Lady of Fuen Santa," or "the holy fountain." Ever since its erection, this Sanctuary has been much frequented by the inhabitants of Cordova and the neighbouring towns. Beauteous and chaste in itself, the chapel

* St. Luke, ii. 51.

where the image of Our Lady stands, has been enriched by the sumptuous thank-offerings of those, whose cure had been miraculously wrought in that holy spot. Amongst the many other wonderful miracles performed there, the cure of the celebrated Jesuit Sanchez, who, from being almost dumb, obtained the faculty of speech, is one of the best authenticated. The present state of the Sanctuary is very satisfactory and edifying. The fervent devotion to Our Blessed Lady, which is practised there, has never flagged since its commencement several hundred years ago: and a traveller, recounting the wonders of the place, assures us, that notwithstanding the ferment of wars and revolutions, which of late has disturbed Spain, Our Lady of Fuen Santa has in no way suffered. This Sanctuary still continues to be, for the people of Cordova, an everflowing and abundant source of grace and benediction. The month of May is one livelong festival, at Our Lady of Fuen Santa. Let us join our intentions to-day, to the devotion and homage of Catholic Spain.

PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD.

Remember, O Most Holy Virgin Mary, that no one hath ever been known to have

had recourse to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy mediation, without obtaining relief. Confiding, therefore, in thy most tender mercy, behold me, a penitent sinner, sighing out my sins before thee, beseeching thee to adopt me for thy son, and to take upon thee the care of my eternal salvation. Despise not, O Mother of Jesus! the petition of thine unworthy servant, but hear and grant my petition. Amen.

Thirteenth Day.

ON THE INCARNATION AND BIRTH OF CHRIST.

MEDITATION.

THE fruit obtained from yesterday's meditation, was a determination to follow Christ and to imitate Him. But in practice this is impossible, unless first we learn to know Him intimately through all the various stages of His life on earth. Whoever desires to follow Christ by imitating Him, after he has invoked the Holy Spirit, and the assistance of Our Blessed Lady, must begin to study closely the wonderful

mysteries contained in His most blessed life. As a child listens to the instructions of its teacher, as an apprentice watches narrowly and intently the handiwork of his master, that thus he may learn the secrets of his art, so must a Christian approach Our Lord, hearken to His words, and observe carefully His every action, if in truth he wishes to follow and to imitate Him.

Let us commence with the Incarnation and Birth of Christ. What examples of profound humility and self-abnegation, are enshrined in this one stupendous mystery!

The first humiliation, which Christ underwent, was to take upon Himself our human flesh. Who can comprehend the immensity of this sacrifice? Let us take in something from a similitude. A certain king was possessed of a large kingdom: he was rich, powerful, and wise, and endowed with many princely talents and the noblest virtues. He was revered and beloved by his subjects as a father, and nothing seemed wanting to complete their and his happiness. Suddenly this great monarch throws away his crown, abandons his kingdom, puts on a tattered garment, hires himself out to work for a common peasant, and remains in that position till the day of his death. Where is the man, who would not stand

aghast with wonder at so marvellous a change? But let us ask a question of our own souls. Who is that dear Child lying in the manger of Bethlehem? He is, in very deed, the only begotten Son of the heavenly Father, the Lord of hosts, the Almighty God. He has left the majesty and splendour of heaven, where He was being praised and adored by all the angels. He has chosen the earth for His dwelling place. He has become a poor man, despised and neglected, and so He remains for thirty-three years in this world. Is it possible to conceive a greater humiliation, or a sacrifice more complete?

Secondly, Christ humbled Himself beyond measure in becoming a child. There is nothing so little honourable in the eyes of the world, as a poor helpless infant. It can neither stand nor walk, eat nor drink, nor provide for itself without the assistance of others. It cannot speak, and when it is ailing or in want, tears and cries are the only means it knows to ask for help. When *we* were children, all this was not so great a suffering to us. We had not the use of reason. But Christ, Who was full of wisdom, and Who, from the very first moment of His life as man, enjoyed in full the beatific vision, Christ Our Lord endured it in all the intensity of humiliation. Look,

then, upon the Babe of Bethlehem, see that He cannot stand, that neither can He walk ; see that, from very weakness, His mother must carry Him in her arms ; see, that He cannot speak one single word ; see again, that He lies in a miserable stable, upon straw, in the cold of winter ; and let him who sees remember, that this very Babe is the Almighty God Himself, Who created heaven and earth, He Who holds the universe in His hands ; that this Babe is the eternal wisdom of the Father, the fountain of all knowledge and understanding ; that this poor Babe is that One, compared to Whom the kings of the earth are beggars, and to Whom belongs "the earth and the fulness thereof."*

But to go further. How did the world receive Our new-born Lord ? He was cast out from His own country and town : for all comers, young and old, men and women, good and bad, found a home that night in Bethlehem, all but Christ and those who followed Him. And how did Jesus bear this ? With joy and gladness. He Himself had even so ordained : for had He willed, might He not have sent a legion of angels beforehand into Bethlehem to announce His coming ? Might He not have appeared in thunder and lightning, to

* Psalm xxiii.

terrify and subdue His people? But nothing of this did Christ. He desired the occasion rather, which offered itself, of receiving and bearing an insult.

And how did the world deal with Christ in aftertime? When it was known at Jerusalem that the King of the Jews was born, how many went thence to adore Him? Not one. Jesus must flee into a foreign land, to avoid a cruel and untimely death. When He lived at Nazareth, obeying in all things St. Joseph, and working for His bread in the sweat of His brow, who ever thought, as they looked upon that fair and holy Boy, that there lay there concealed the eternal treasures of heaven? Neither God the Father, nor His only begotten Son, nor the Holy Ghost, had revealed it, save to a chosen few: nor did Mary or Joseph proclaim that great and sacred truth, for thirty long years of life: and the neighbours would go and come, and knew no more about Him, than to say, that at Nazareth there dwelt a good young man, the son (as they thought) of Joseph the carpenter. Oh, how great a humiliation was this! the Creator of the world, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings, for thirty years labouring with His hands and serving a master, and yet, with a small

exception, unknown and uncared for by the very creatures He Himself had made!

Let us now draw two important thoughts, from the depths of this great mystery. The first, that from the example of Christ, nothing is plainly more pleasing to God than a love of humiliation. His own blessed words have announced how well it shall fare with us, if we take the last place; and still better shall it be, if we do not even wait for the command of God, but seek ourselves for that which is humbling and poor. Suppose we had lived before Christ, and that the heavenly Father had asked us, with others, in what manner He should send His Son into the world, doubtless we should have answered, that His foster-father should be at least a king, that His mother should be an empress, the place of His birth some magnificent palace, and that all the people of the earth should assemble immediately to do Him honour. Such, no doubt, would have been our thought on the matter. But how different the counsels of God! "The Mother of My Son," says God, in His decrees, "shall be a poor simple virgin, His dwelling-place a stable, His bed a little straw; He must not command, but obey; He must not be in honour—He must live and die despised, neglected, and insulted." Oh, how blind

are we! for what value we more than honour and praise? are there not many amongst us who would even suffer death, rather than live to be dishonoured? and the while, Christ Our Lord loves nothing so much as to be condemned and scorned by men. Let us turn our eyes on Jesus. We shall see there nought but humiliation, and the entire denial of one's self: and this was precisely what found favour in the sight of the Father of heaven, and saved the world from eternal perdition. Ought not a Christian, then, to love humiliations? or if he has not got this love, ought he not strive to obtain it? or, at least, should he not accept cheerfully and thankfully the occasions of self-abnegation, which are constantly sent us by God?—By a second thought drawn from the example of Christ, we learn, that nothing is more hateful to God than the love of honours and the applause of men. The less a soul is like to Christ, the more distasteful is that soul in the sight of God. What resemblance, then, can there be to Christ in a soul, that is ever on the stretch for praise and esteem from men? Every thought of Jesus, was full of humbleness and annihilation of self: He desired nothing but insult and neglect: His whole life was passed, from beginning to end, amidst the contempts and revilings

of His own creatures : and yet many who profess to follow Him, loathe an insult or a sneer, and are huffed and indignant at every fancied cause of offence. Now, how stands it with us ? What a difference between *our* hearts, and the Heart of Jesus ! how humble was Jesus, how proud and vain are we ! how full of our own conceits, always thinking well of ourselves, admiring ourselves, listening with pleasure to our own praise—perhaps even by ingenious artifices inducing others to praise us ! How mean and base is this—so low even, as to bring shame to our cheek when the world discovers it ! Let us, then, hate and detest it, not on account of the world, but because God hates it. With the example of Christ in His birth and incarnation before us, let us resolve henceforward never to entertain thoughts of vanity and pride, never to say a word to our own praise—never to do anything for the sake of men's esteem. Let us resolve besides, to receive all insults and affronts cheerfully, and to bear them in silence for the love of Christ. “ O Jesus ! we are sinners : yet we desire to imitate Thee, to be like to Thee. Help us potently with Thy Grace, to overcome all temptations to pride and vanity—that we may become humble and lowly as Thou.”

And Mary, how humble was she ! what

a life-like picture of the Heart of Jesus was the Heart of Mary, so lowly, so resigned, so perfectly ready and desirous to meet with scorn and reproach! always taking the last place, and never seeking for honour. And has not God honoured her nevertheless, honoured her because of the humble spirit she bore? as Mary herself declared in prophecy—"He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, for behold henceforth all nations shall call me blessed."*

"O Mary most humble, assist us with thy prayers, that having learnt to know thy Son on earth, we may imitate Him, and thus one day be ranked among the blessed in that heavenly kingdom, which is prepared for those only who are meek and humble of heart."†

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

There is a great church in Paris, which we must not forget to visit during our month of May. The Parisians, as a people, have always had a great devotion to the Mother of God, and no one can doubt that this devotion has saved them from many disasters, and above all, that amid the heresies and disbelief of modern times, it

* St. Luke, l. 52, 48.

† St. Matthew, xl. 29.

has preserved them their faith intact. The glorious old cathedral of Paris, is well known by the beautiful name of "Notre Dame," or "Our Lady." It is never called anything else, and those two simple words are at once a fitting appellation for a Christian church, and a standing testimony to all ages of the piety of the French people, especially the Parisians, and of their tender love for Our Lady. This is one of the largest and most magnificent, of all the Sanctuaries of Mary. It has been often enriched and decorated by royal hands, and frequently visited by kings, and by crowds of holy pilgrims. It is not now so much a pilgrimage, as formerly: but the Month of Mary is observed there, with much fervour. Let us go, therefore, in faith to the cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris, and as we admire the glorious old structure of Catholic times, let us thank God Who inspired the pious founders so to honour His Mother, and let our hearts swell, as we remember how little comparatively is now done for God and Our Lady.

PRAYER OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.

O most Blessed and most sweet Virgin Mary, full of mercy! to thy compassion do I commend my soul and body, my thoughts, actions, my life and my death. O Lady

of mine ! help and strengthen me against the snares of the devil. Obtain for me a true and perfect love, with which to love thy most beloved Son and my Lord Jesus Christ with my whole heart, and after Him to love thee above all things. O my Queen and my Mother ! may thy most powerful intercession obtain for me perseverance in this love till death, and after death do thou conduct me to the kingdom of the blessed. Amen.

Fourteenth Day.

ON THE HIDDEN LIFE OF CHRIST.

MEDITATION.

WE have meditated on the sublime lesson in humility, contained in the Incarnation and Birth of Our Blessed Lord. Let us now endeavour to contemplate the wonderful mystery of the Hidden Life of Christ. To give up one's will into the hands of God, to be perfectly resigned and contented, in whatever station we may find ourselves, or whatsoever the troubles may be that encompass us, and continuously till death, to do all this, is a matter surrounded with numberless difficulties. But nothing less is required of us : for, difficul-

ties though there be, they were all foreseen and provided against by God, and greater than these did Christ endure before us. It is to encourage us under the various trials of our life, and to assist in making us more contented, that the Hidden Life of Christ at Nazareth is now to be meditated upon. Whoever considers this great mystery with an humble heart, will experience much comfort and peace to his soul: whereas such truths, forcible as they are, disturb and confound the proud and the worldly.

We read of Our Lord in the Holy Gospel, that "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."* But what do these words mean? They signify that Christ, the true and very God, the King of kings, the Lord of hosts, the Lord of heaven and earth, went down to a poor town in Galilee, and that there He lived till He was thirty years of age, in a state of perfect obedience to Mary and Joseph, and working at an humble trade. And now let us behold Our Lord at Nazareth, toiling and earning His bread in the sweat of His brow: let us look reverently at that divine Youth, and let us call to mind Who and What He is. He Whom we see before us is possessed of such power and wisdom, that with one act of His will He could make

* St. Luke, ii. 51.

Himself known to all men on earth: His might is such, that by His only word He could destroy the whole world, as before He made it: the qualities of His mind are so ravishing, that by a look He could entrance, so to speak, the souls of men and draw them to Him. And what is He doing? He is labouring with His hands. Those hands, that brought the world into being, that direct the entire scope of the universe, are sawing and cutting wood, collecting sticks, sweeping the house. In a word, the Man God, Jesus Christ, is leading a useless life in the eyes of the world, and a foolish one. No one knows Him but the people of Nazareth, and they, as it were, know Him not. And who is doing this? The very same, Who a few years later, (and then had He willed) was able to preach in the temple of Solomon, to dispute with the learned on high points of philosophy and law: He, Who could lay down rules the most sublime for the government of kings and nations: He, Who was able to fill cities and whole countries with His fame, healing the sick, teaching His followers, converting sinners, and attracting every one to His doctrines, by the splendour of the miracles He performed. All this He might have done, during the long time of His residence at Nazareth: but it was the divine Will

that He should remain instead, hidden in the obscurity of a poor town, in the workshop of a poor carpenter, to all appearance ingloriously employed. O wondrous prodigy of an humble heart !

But what great truth is it, that lies concealed in this mystery ? There is Jesus, living poorly at Nazareth, apparently doing nothing, burying His talents and His powers, neglected and forgotten by all but Mary and Joseph : and yet He was doing all things, even the very perfection of all things. That life which the world looked upon, and still would look upon, as vain, as useless, and abject, was laborious, most useful, and glorious, in the eyes of His heavenly Father. And, why ? Because Jesus was living, as His heavenly Father willed He should live—because He was doing that, which His Father ordered Him to do : and from this truth we learn, that to please God, and to pave our way to salvation, it is by no means necessary, to be rich or learned—to distinguish ourselves in the world, nor even to present a respectable appearance : it is not necessary that we should possess much power and influence over others. All that is required of us, may be comprised in the one word—“doing the Will of Almighty God.” To live perfectly and contentedly in whatever station of life, position, or cir-

cumstances, God may place us, this is the grand truth we learn from the Hidden Life of Our Lord at Nazareth, the truth which Our Lord spent thirty long years of His life to teach us. We saw clearly that this was our duty, in meditating on the spirit with which we are to use the things of this world : but the task is hard. And who finds it so, let him put the example of Jesus of Nazareth before his eyes. At the sight of such poverty and humility in Our Lord, who can desire to be rich or great? When Christ is neglected and despised, who can wish to be honoured and praised? When Jesus Our Lord and Master labours for us, in the cold of winter and the heat of summer, who can complain that he is forced to work for his living? If our merits are overlooked, and no one cares for us, was it not the same with Jesus? If others are preferred before us, and we must live in obscurity, was it not thus with Jesus? Who can resent an injury, or who cannot but endure an affront, if he looks at the life of Jesus? Again : when a man feels inclined to murmur and pine, as he beholds himself cold and needy, and his neighbour well clothed and happy, as his life seems all misery and wretchedness, whilst his neighbour has every enjoyment and pleasure, how may not Nazareth teach him contentment, and even joy ! for

such was the life of Jesus. Was it nothing for Our Lord, to live so long a time in a poor workshop, obedient to the voice and the every look of a labouring man? Was it nothing for Christ—for Him who had come into the world, to enlighten and save it, to hide His glory and power—to endure neglect and contempt for so many years? Oh, how great an example we find in the Hidden Life at Nazareth!

But some one will say, "if I but knew the Will of God! Christ knew it, and fulfilled it. If God would but commission my good angel to tell me every day what His holy Will was, and in every circumstance, what a happiness that would be, and how cheerfully I should accomplish it!" But, let us ask our souls, whether we have really retained the Faith. If so, we believe that God orders and disposes all things, that not even a hair falls from our head without His divine permission, that He rules and governs the universe. Consequently, blessings or misfortunes, health or sickness, riches or poverty, insults or praises, are all the will of God to us. Hence, he that resigns himself and remains contented under all these, he, and no other, fulfils the Will of God. And more: such a one is as certain, that by this contentment he is pleasing God and working out his salvation, as Christ

was certain at Nazareth that He was doing the Will of His heavenly Father. Great is the blessedness of a blind obedience to the decrees of heaven.

Let us now turn to Christ and pray, "Although, O most humble Jesus, Thou wert the King of heaven, the Light of the world, nevertheless didst Thou live long concealed and employed in a lowly trade. And we, who are but sin, have been full of pride and vain glory, desiring to display ourselves to advantage, to be praised and thought much of in the world, never content unless we had plenty to eat and drink, never satisfied unless we were esteemed and preferred before others. But now, having seen Thy holy example at Nazareth, we perceive our sin. We acknowledge that to be humble and poor, in misery and sickness, to be forlorn and neglected, and even insulted, if thus we perform the Will of God, are states more preferable than riches and honour, health and earthly happiness, if in the latter we only seek our own will and pleasure. O Lord! give us, then, a complete indifference to every place and position, grant us an entire resignation in troubles, a detachment from whatever this world accounts as blessings, that we may be ready to live obscurely and in humble

stations, to be laughed at or scorned, according as Thy holy Will doth dispose."

The life of Mary at Nazareth was a close imitation of her divine Son. She was obedient and faithful to God in all things. But her obedience and faithfulness, were remarkable especially for their long suffering. Although Jesus "came unto His own, and His own received Him not,"* nevertheless to Mary had the greatness of her Son been revealed. Well did she know Whom she tended and nursed, and Who afterwards served her and worked by her side in St. Joseph's shop. How must she not have looked on in surprise, at the sight before her: and yet, amid all that poverty and contempt, for thirty long years at Nazareth, not a word nor a murmur ever sullied the perfect union of her soul with God, sharing every humiliation with Jesus, and desirous only to fulfil the Will of the eternal Father. "O Mary! pray for us, that we may so learn to submit our wills to God, that whether in misfortune or despised by the world, in all things we may evermore keep before us the example of Our Lord at Nazareth."

* St. John, i. 11.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Of all the shrines of the Blessed Virgin, that of Monserrato in Spain is the most picturesque as regards situation. The mountain known by that name consists of an extended ridge of rocks, intersected with caves and grottoes, and covered with beautiful trees and luxuriant verdure; from out of which rise up numerous groups of cones or natural pyramids, for several hundred feet in the air. It is here that our pious forefathers erected, about half-way up the mountain, the celebrated sanctuary of Our Lady of Monserrato. Spanish writers agree, in giving to this place of pilgrimage, an origin replete with wonders and mystery. The conventual buildings are stately and extensive, and are surrounded by a vast number of ecclesiastical edifices, which form together a noble and imposing aspect. In these houses there dwell continually many monks, hermits, lay-brothers and chorister-boys, by whom prayer and the service of the church is uninterruptedly kept up. Amongst the latter, may be seen twenty-four youths, sons of the first families of Spain, who have been consecrated from their childhood upwards to the service of Our Blessed Lady. Ever

since its foundation in 880, Monserrato has been a favourite pilgrimage. Princes and sovereigns of Spain would often climb the steep and rugged path, which led to the shrine of Mary: here liberated captives came in crowds, to hang up the chains they wore under the Moorish yoke: here the blessed Saint Ignatius of Loyola suspended his knightly sword before Our Lady's image, and in a cavern not far distant did he pass the two years of retirement, during which he composed the inspired Spiritual Exercises. Nor is this holy sanctuary less visited at the present day. The devotion of the good Catholics of those parts is very fervent, and by all accounts the Month of Mary is especially cherished. Let us join the pious work as far as we are able, and say a prayer to Our Lady of Monserrato.

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

O Most Holy and Blessed Lady, thou who are seated on the very heights of the paradise of happiness, take pity, alas! upon us, who are in the wilderness of misery. Thou dost enjoy the fulness of delights, and we must drink of the dregs of desolation. Oh! make thou intercession for us, that we may have strength to support our afflictions. Amen.

Fifteenth Day.

ON THE PUBLIC LIFE OF CHRIST.

MEDITATION.

NOTHING is more difficult than to live blamelessly in this world, as regards our neighbour. To love our neighbour is a command, second only to that of loving God: and yet to do so, is a bitter thing at times—so bitter that, no doubt, many lose their souls through neglect of this commandment. He who has learned to demean himself, inwardly and outwardly, with love and patience towards his neighbour, has attained to no small degree of perfection. But how few such are there, and yet how necessary for our eternal salvation! By way of doing something, therefore, towards obtaining this virtue, let us strive, by a closer view of another part of Our Blessed Lord's life, to learn from His example to be "meek and humble of heart."*

Whatever difficulties we find in loving each other, and in bearing with the defects and shortcomings of our neighbour—all these difficulties, and much greater, had Christ to meet and to labour under.

* St. Matthew, xl. 29.

One of these difficulties is to be ever surrounded by people, who appear incapable of being moved by any example or work. How often, when we have determined to be religious and good, and have fancied that our very example would necessarily produce its effect on people's minds, that it was impossible they should continue to abuse us, whilst we were only endeavouring to love God and them—how often, in such cases, have we not experienced rough, uncourteous behaviour, and the deepest ingratitude ! But what is this, compared to the treatment Our Blessed Lord received at the hands of the Jews ? For three years was He constantly employed in serving them, making long journeys from town to town, and walking about from one village to another. He was ever preaching to them, with an earnest and touching eloquence. He heaped blessings without number upon them. He worked miracles for them, He cured their sick, and raised their dead. And of what use was it all ? Some despised Him, and asked in derision where this carpenter's son had learned these things. Others laughed at Him, and turned His doctrine into ridicule. The Pharisees said He was a wicked man, who broke the laws of God ; and the high priest called Him a blasphemer, a seducer of the people, and

warned the Jews against Him. Hence it came to pass, that but a small number followed Him, whilst the rest remained His enemies. To us indeed it were hard to love such people. Not so to Jesus.

Another of our difficulties is to have to do with persons, who are ever putting a malicious construction on every action we perform, misrepresenting and calumniating us. But Christ encountered the same, at well nigh every step of His public life. When He had healed a sick man compassionately on the Sabbath, His calumniators declared that He could not be from God, because He kept not the Lord's Day holy. He entered the houses of public sinners, and sat with them at table, that thus by love and kindness He might convert them; and at this the Jews affected to take scandal. He worked wonders, that by such means He might bring men to the knowledge of His divine power; and they answered Him, saying, that His miracles were wrought by the power of the devil. Whatever He did, no sooner was it done, than He became subject to every possible calumny and misrepresentation. And what ingratitude on all sides! Jesus came to Nazareth, and preached in the synagogue, full of love and good will to His own townsmen; and for thanks, they sought to

throw Him down from a high rock. He preached in Jerusalem, and told His hearers that He was the Messias and Christ the Son of God. And how did they show their gratitude? By taking up stones to kill Him. Oh, how must Jesus have loved them to bear with this!

Another difficulty is to have people about us, that are either playing us false, or who hate us outright. How very hard it is to love such neighbours! But what did not Jesus endure? did He not know, with a perfect knowledge, all the evil thoughts that Judas had against Him—how he was playing Him false, and going to betray Him? And then, the Scribes and the Pharisees, had they not long before determined to put Him to death; and, with keen hatred and malice, did they not look without ceasing for means to encompass their wicked design? And Jesus knew this.

See then, how must Christ have suffered, and how many difficulties His love must have overcome, that still He could love a people who had deserved eternal hatred rather than love! In the meantime, what did Jesus? if we consider His life we shall see, that notwithstanding all this ingratitude, on the part of His enemies, He loved them with the tenderest love and affection. We must search the inmost recesses of

the Heart of Jesus, and there learn to love our neighbour.

Our Blessed Lord was the eternal Wisdom itself: and as such, He saw daily thousands of men, who hated Him, and who considered Him to be an impostor and a blasphemer: He saw daily thousands of men, who abused and insulted Him: He saw thousands daily, who vehemently desired to destroy Him—all this He saw with His all-seeing eyes, and yet never was He angry—for love consumed His Heart. And we, who cannot bear a reproach from a fellow-creature, we to whom an unkind word, or an ill-natured remark, is an immediate incentive to anger,—how would it stand with us, if a hundred persons every day were surrounding us, calumniating us, cursing and swearing at us, and seeking to destroy us? Could we love them? or is the task as yet too great? If so, we are far removed from the love of Jesus.

The love of Jesus, and His patience, endured stedfastly through all difficulties. Remember, once more, Judas the apostate. For three years Our Blessed Lord had him before His eyes: He knew the secrets of that evil heart: He knew how, at last he would betray Him. But His love abated nothing. He walked about in his company, as with a friend; He gave him the power

to work miracles, as He gave it to others : He washed his feet, as He washed the feet of the others—so that his very fellow-apostles, at the last supper, knew not the wickedness of Judas. Even at the hour of His betrayal, did Jesus embrace him, and call him His friend. Could He have been more loving with St. John, whom of all the apostles He loved the best? O the endless love of Jesus!

But more : the ungrateful Jews went on every day redoubling their blind hatred and malice, whilst Jesus increased His favours and blessings. He prayed daily to His Father for their salvation. He worked daily fresh miracles, to bring them to acknowledge His divine character. To melt their stony hearts, He spoke daily to them with unction and a thrilling language ; and in the very garden of Gethsemani, amid the throng of fiends that filled it, He healed one who came to apprehend Him.

Oh, now we may know something of Christian love. To love those that love us, who are well-inclined towards us—who do good to us—that is to love like the Jews and heathens. To love those who hate us, who are evil disposed, who injure us, who calumniate us—to love those, is to love like Jesus. What a love was His! He had to mix with people, who were cursing Him

and blaspheming Him to His very face, who cried Him down, and belied Him on every occasion; with people, who, in the guise of friendship, were ever seeking to deliver Him up to His enemies, who were firmly determined never to rest until they had crucified Him. But nothing of all this was able to extinguish His love: He loved them even unto death, even the death of the Cross. And now let us turn to ourselves. How much do we possess of the forbearance and love of Jesus Christ? Do we love our neighbour as He did? Oh, no. A sharp answer, a contemptuous observation, a trifling affront, yea, even a cross and unpleasant countenance—are they not often sufficient to turn every spark of love for our neighbour, into a feeling of hatred and revenge? Too true, indeed, is it: and this, after all Christ has done for us, after all the grace and means of salvation He has given to each of us! So little, hitherto, have most men profited by the blessed example of Jesus. But with us, let it not be so in future. Now we know how to love our neighbour, not after the manner of a heathen, but as Jesus loved. Oh, let us beat our breasts for sorrow at our past unworthiness, and, for the love of Jesus, let us resolve especially on the following: 1. As we must love our neighbour as ourselves,

never to say anything of him that we should not wish said of ourselves. 2. Never to entertain a rash judgment, a suspicion, or any contemptuous thought, with respect to our neighbour's conduct or character. 3. To be gentle and patient with all, so that a harsh or unkind expression shall never pass our lips. 4. To be always ready to do our neighbour a service, for the love of Jesus. 5. When injured, to pray for our enemies, and to banish all ideas of hatred or revenge. 6. To be particularly forbearing with the faults and weaknesses of others, remembering all Christ must have endured in this way from the rude and ignorant men about Him. "O Jesus, true and only source of Christian love ! give us grace to love our neighbour in this way, and thus to save our souls."

Our Blessed Lady is a beautiful example of the charity we owe our neighbour. No saint has ever entered heaven, that has not practised this virtue in a heroic degree ; but amongst all those saints, there is none so bright as Mary. A close imitator of Our Blessed Lord, she had a perfect love of her neighbour, and as she joined with her whole soul in every suffering of her Divine Son, so she keenly felt every insult, and all the ingratitude of the Jews. Yet, like Him, not a word passed her lips, nor did a thought

lodge in her heart, but of the deepest love, patience, and forbearance towards those, who being His enemies, were likewise hers. From this faithful copy of Christ, let us take courage. Mary, exalted as she is, was of flesh and blood like us. When we are in trouble, therefore, and our feelings outraged, when we are falsely accused, when everybody seems to conspire to annoy or despise us, let us look up to the glorious example of her who was the first follower of Jesus. "Mary, faithful imitator of Our Lord, pray for us, that in every difficulty we may never forget to love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Lyons, city of early martyrs, and in modern times the centre of the Institution for the Propagation of the Faith, is famous in the possession of a glorious Sanctuary to Mary, called Notre Dame, or Our Lady of Fourvières. The city of Lyons is divided into three distinct parts, that which lies on the left bank of the River Rhone, that which lies between the Rhone and the Saone, and the suburb of Fourvières, which is built chiefly upon a high hill overhanging Lyons. In the very midst of the latter, stands the Sanctuary which we are now going to visit. It is almost impossible to describe, on the

one hand, the grandeur of the situation, and again, the extraordinary piety and devotion of the townspeople to this place. Suffice it to say, that the view from Fourvières comprises an immense plain, watered by the rivers Rhone and Saone, and that the gilded statue of Mary, which has lately been placed on the top of the church spire, may be seen at a distance of no less than forty miles. The devotion of the inhabitants displays itself in various striking ways, principally, however, from the fact, that in the many streets and lanes of that lovely suburb there is scarcely a shop which does not contain holy pictures, rosaries, and other such religious objects for sale, and also from the continual flow of visitors and pilgrims to the Sanctuary itself. That part of the town is considered in a manner sacred to Mary, and it is there that the principal convents and religious houses are to be found, numerous enough in Lyons. It is related that St. Thomas of Canterbury, when in exile, came to visit St. Pothinius, then Bishop of Lyons, and that as the two prelates stood in the cathedral precincts contemplating the fair hill of Fourvières, St. Pothinius told St. Thomas that he was about to build a church on the mountain, and asked his advice as to whom it should be dedicated. St. Thomas answered, "to

Our Blessed Lady and the next martyr of Holy Church :” and his words were accomplished, for returning soon after to England, and suffering martyrdom, the Church of Fourvières was dedicated to Our Lady, and the side altar to St. Thomas of Canterbury, and so it remains to the present day. The love of the people of Lyons for Our Lady of Fourvières is quite marvellous. They recur to her in all their difficulties and troubles, and there is no doubt, that amongst many other prodigies, Our Lady’s intercession has protected that city from the scourge of cholera on three different occasions, in the years 1832, 1835, and 1850, favours, that the good townsmen have not failed to acknowledge, by crowded processions from all parts to the Sanctuary. It was from the heights of Fourvières that His Holiness, Pope Pius VII., on the 19th of April, 1805, after having offered the Holy Sacrifice, gave his apostolical blessing to the whole of France. Let us, then, make our spiritual pilgrimage to-day to that sweet Sanctuary, and say a good Catholic prayer to Our Lady of Fourvières.

PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD.

O Holy Lady, help thou our weakness !
And who is more fit to address Our Lord
Jesus Christ, than thou, who dost enjoy in

such close vicinity His most sweet converse? Speak then, do thou speak, O Lady ! for thy Son giveth ear to thee, and all that thou dost ask of Him, thou wilt obtain. Amen.

Sixteenth Day.

ON CHRISTIAN HUMILITY AND SUFFERING.

MEDITATION.

THE scope of our meditation to-day shall be to imitate Christ by the practice of the particular virtues, which shone forth in the various mysteries of His Incarnation and Birth, His Hidden and Public Life. These were—a great humility, and a great love of suffering and mortification.

To speak first of humility. In order to obtain a proper esteem for this great virtue, that we may learn to love it, and desire to possess it, let us understand, 1. how admirable humility is in itself : 2. how useful to us : and 3. how righteous and how just before God, that all men should practise it.

Real humility is the foundation of all faith. It is superior to reason. Hence the apostle St. Paul speaks of humility, as

“taking captive our entire understanding.”* And the great St. Augustine having been asked, what was the principal point of importance in the religion and discipline of Jesus Christ, answered—“In the first place, humility; in the second place, humility; and in the third place, humility.”† Where there is no humility, there faith does not exist. Humility is therefore the corner-stone of all religion, the basis of all good discipline; and, like faith itself, is consequently of the greatest value as a virtue, and of the highest excellence. But besides, humility is the foundation of all the other virtues: for “in the same manner as pride is the beginning of all sin, so humility is the root of all virtue.”‡ Thus St. Bernard tells us, that to him who does not possess real humility, “every other good work is practically of no avail.”§ Without it, the religious life is a delusion, mortification is nothing but hypocrisy, and the noblest virtue and self-sacrifice is turned into a degrading vice.

That humility is really the most useful of virtues for us as Christians, and that in consequence we ought dearly to love it, can be seen from its effects in the soul.

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

† St. Aug., Epist. 56.

‡ St. Bern. de Consideratione.

§ Ibidem.

The practice of humility makes us more like to Christ; because abjection and lowliness having been the state of life which Our Blessed Lord chose on earth, an humble soul becomes as it were "the living image of Christ," "another Christ," conforming itself in all its feelings and affections to the divine model. Such a soul will love to be despised and insulted with Christ, because Christ Himself loved to be despised and insulted. And of what great use is this in the spiritual life! Who can depict in its true colours, or describe properly, the immense value of such a lifelike imitation of Christ? To wear the same dress as Jesus: to feel with Him, to have but one will with Him, to be cared for or neglected, to be loved or hated, just when He was, and no more; to have, so to speak, a community of goods with Him, to be sorrowful when He is sorrowful, to rejoice when He rejoices, and above all, to be ever humble, because Christ was ever humble—what a blessed state! And such is it, to be humble. Who, then, but would love humility, if he considered how much, by being humble, he was likening his soul to the soul of Jesus Christ? Moreover, the practice of true humility has the effect of producing a perfect peace in the soul. The source of all trouble and discomfort, is

pride and the desire to be honoured: but when a man is humble, and looks no longer for anything better than contempt and insult, this fountain of anxiety is dried up. What is there that can disturb the quiet of a man, by whom injuries and affronts are regarded as the road towards heaven? What can rob such a man of the happiness he possesses, when he is ready to receive, with smiles and joy, a cuff or a blow on the face? Has he not found rather, to use the words of the *Imitation of Christ*, a very "paradise upon earth,"* so great is the peace of his soul? And all this proceeds from true humility. Hence St. John Climacus tells us, that when we perceive that any one is in the enjoyment of real peace, we may rest assured of his profound humility.

How just, that all men should be thoroughly humble. The life of Our Blessed Lord is a long lesson in humility. And if Jesus Christ, although incapable of sin, and adorned with every perfection, yet humbled Himself deeply from the first moment of His Incarnation even unto death, how much more we, poor sinning mortals! The Most Holy One, the Just One, the King of kings, the Judge of the living and the dead, before Whom every

* *Imitation of Christ*, Book II. 12.

knee must bow—*He* acknowledges His nothingness, as far as relates to His human nature—*He* calls Himself “the last of men,” the “most abject of men:” and shall a vile worm of the earth, a handful of dust, who is all weakness, full of sin, a very nothing—shall this creature dare to exalt himself, and to wish to be preferred before others? Not so. For he that bears in mind how Almighty God in becoming Man so loved this holy virtue, must surely love it for its great excellence, because of its great use in the spiritual life, and because it is congruous and just that all men should be humble.

Secondly, as to mortification or the love of suffering. Again, we must put before us the example of Our Blessed Lord. The mortification of the soul and body, and a perfect resignation of will under troubles and afflictions, are the objects to be aimed at in meditating on the life of Christ. And whoever does not endeavour to obtain these, is not really following Christ. He may think that he is: but if he does not try to live as Our Blessed Lord lived, to do what He did, the following of Christ is a pure imagination. Let us see, then, what this mortification of ourselves means. St. Bernard says, that “to mortify the works of the flesh by the spirit, is a certain kind of

martyrdom, milder indeed, as regards the actual circumstances, yet more crucifying, because of its long duration: a very martyrdom without blood.”* How many fervent Christians have desired, and even now desire, martyrdom! What more glorious death, as they truly say, than to die for the Faith, with a perfect certainty of Paradise before one! But let such good people only turn their desire of martyrdom upon themselves, let them subdue the flesh, bridle their appetites, and restrain their love of pleasure. Such a crucifixion of soul and body is in truth a martyrdom, of a lesser degree in human estimation, but as far as real merit is concerned, mayhap even greater than the other.

But the love of mortification is the life of a Christian soul. All Christians should cultivate it. They promised to do so in baptism, when they renounced the works of the flesh: and therefore, he who lays aside mortification, is so far breaking his baptismal vows. And further: we are obliged to mortification, by reason of the many sins we have committed. These sins must be satisfied for, as “nothing defiled shall enter heaven.”† We may have confessed our sins, and obtained par-

* St. Bern. Serm. 30. in cantic.

† Apocalypse, xxi 27.

don for the guilt incurred: but there still remains the punishment: and no one can enter heaven, until this punishment is cleared off. But how? Either by the fire of purgatory, or the sufferings of this life. Whoever, therefore, does not wish to burn in the next world, had better mortify himself in this. A great saint has said, that "he whose conscience reproaches him with having done that which is unlawful, should endeavour to abstain even from certain things which are lawful;"* and this, because it is right and proper, that the body, which has been the accomplice of sin, should partake likewise of pain and suffering to satisfy for sin.

Another incitement to make us love suffering, or at least to cause us to endure our afflictions with the utmost amount of patience and resignation, is the great utility of mortification. It is a dogma of faith that to every supernatural act of mortification performed by a just man, there is a corresponding degree of grace attached, lasting and sanctifying: and to every such grace, a proportionate degree of eternal glory in heaven. † Imagine therefore, what a valuable treasure of grace for this world, and glory for the next, is secured by him who continuously seizes upon all the numerous

* St. Greg. in Evang. † Council of Trent, Sess. vi. 30.

occasions, which in the course of the day present themselves, for mortifying his flesh and conquering his passions. He then, who crucifies himself in this life, will assuredly have but little to suffer in the life to come. And if any one should find it hard to resign himself with patience to God in suffering, and to offer up that suffering for his sins, if he find it still more difficult to desire ardently to suffer, how hereafter will he stand the woful flames of purgatory? Of how great a worth, therefore, is mortification and the love of suffering!

Let us conclude our reflections to-day with a sincere resolution to leave nothing undone, till we can say that the practice of true humility, and a desire of mortification, have begun within us. The principal steps in humility are these. 1. To have a low opinion of our individual merits, so that in speaking about our own affairs, we should consider as though the person spoken of, was mean and of no account. 2. When despised and insulted by others, to bear it in cheerful silence. 3. Even to desire the contempt and scorn of our fellow-men. 4. When any one injures us, or persecutes us, to rejoice with the Apostles, that we have been found worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. True humility is voluntary, not forced. Were it otherwise, there would be many

humble persons in the world: whereas in reality, there are few such. It must likewise be sincere, not feigned. A pretended humility is only another name for pride, and, according to St. Augustine, the greatest pride of all. He who is truly humble, will also be ever on the watch for occasions to practise this virtue, ready and even anxious for them at all moments, yet prudent and moderate, in discreet subjection the while to those who are placed over us.

And now let us make a fervent prayer to Our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us ask Him to teach us true humility, and, as we contemplate the mysteries of His life on earth, to allow us intimately to know Him, and knowing Him, faithfully to follow Him; and having faithfully followed Him on earth, that at length we may receive our everlasting reward in heaven. The humble alone shall be there exalted; and, as Christ Himself said—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Nor is it less requisite to be mortified and long suffering in this world. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?" And, think we, that we shall escape that which no mortal has escaped before us? Were not the saints all lovers of the cross

* St. Matt. v. 3. St. Luke, xxiv. 29.

and of suffering? and shall we presume to seek any other road to heaven, but this royal road of the cross? But for our encouragement, we can remember that those who suffer with Christ here, shall reign with Him eternally hereafter. And for prayers and intercession, let us fly to Mary. She was most humble, and so rejoiced to suffer, that her life was one continual martyrdom. "O Mother of Christ," let us say, "true disciple of Our Lord, the handmaid whose humility God regarded, whose Sacred Heart was pierced with a sevenfold sword of grief: Mary, the Queen of Martyrs, receive us under thy saving patronage, procure for us the grace to be humble, and so to suffer and mortify ourselves here below, that we may deserve one day to dwell beside thee in heaven. Amen."

**VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN
MARY.**

The Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedlen, situated in Switzerland, not far from the lake of Zurich, has been celebrated for many centuries as a Sanctuary to Our Blessed Lady. This magnificent monastery which dates from the ninth century, is not erected under a genial sky: its belfry is covered with snow, during a great part of the year: at its base stretches forth a

sterile landscape, enclosing a wild beauty indeed, but where no fruit is ever ripened, and scarcely any flowers are ever known to bloom. But there Our Blessed Lady has been pleased to manifest her power, and the rocky path of the sacred mountain has not seldom been moistened with the noblest blood in Germany, who had undertaken the painful task of ascending bare-footed to the sanctuary. The abbatial church is considerable, and the interior most richly ornamented. Almost at the entrance stands the famous statue of the Blessed Virgin, known as Our Lady of Einsiedlen. The image is miraculous, and was given to the abbey centuries ago by the Princess Hildegarde, abbess of a convent at Zurich. The pilgrims now come chiefly from the Black Forest, and the Catholic cantons of Switzerland; and on the principal feast, the 14th of September, they amount generally to the number of 20,000. The devotion of the Month of Mary has found a warm-hearted home at Einsiedlen. Let us endeavour to-day to join fervently in spirit with the prayers and devout praises of Mary, which are going on there doubtless at this very moment.

PRAYERS OF ST. BONAVENTURE AND
ST. PHILIP NERI.

O Mary! may my heart never cease to love thee, and my tongue never cease to praise thee. O Virgin and Mother! grant that I may always remember thee. Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me. Amen.

Seventeenth Day.

ON THE TWO STANDARDS.

MEDITATION.

ALREADY, in a former meditation on the "Kingdom of Christ," we saw clearly the necessity and obligation under which every one lies of following Christ, lest by faint-heartedness we become traitors to His cause, and turn to be soldiers of the devil. To-day we shall enter more into particulars; and in order to renew and recreate within our breasts, the ardent desire and firm determination entertained before, we shall consider the *end* which Our Lord on the one hand, and His arch-enemy the devil on the other, propose to themselves in calling men to follow them. Nor shall we forget to

reflect on the *means*, which both these generals make use of in conducting their warfare, that by admiring the one, and execrating the other, we may strengthen our wills more effectually in an earnest resolve to follow Christ "whithersoever He goeth."

The end for which Lucifer, or the devil, seeks to draw all men to his standard is, that by so doing, they may abandon God and insult His divine Majesty, and thus plunge themselves into the abyss of hell. The devil hates God, with an eternal hatred: and he hates men likewise. He hates God, because he has been cast out for ever from His sight, and hence he cannot endure that any creature should ever love or honour Him. He hates men with an implacable hatred, because he knows that God has prepared for them the everlasting glory and happiness of heaven, which might have been his. Thus jealousy, envy, and furious hatred devour his soul, and urge him on continually to leave no stone unturned in diverting us from heaven, and dragging us down along with himself into hell.

The end which Our Lord proposes to Himself in calling all men to His standard is, that thus they may serve and love His Heavenly Father, and by such means save

their souls. The Sacred Heart of Our Lord burns with an infinite love, first, towards His Father in heaven, whom He loves with the most perfect of loves, and whom He desires that all men should love : secondly, towards us men, whom He loves in the tenderest manner, and whom He wishes, therefore, to enjoy eternal happiness hereafter.

Let us now endeavour to see the *manner* and *means*, by which these two great leaders seek to encompass the objects they have in view. And, to assist us, it will be useful to place before our eyes a picture of that which is now actually going on in the invisible world. Let us imagine to ourselves the scene which the two camps present, that of the devil on the one hand, on the other that of Jesus Christ. The camp of the devil we may suppose to lie in the broad plain of Babylon, which city is symbolical of vice and iniquity. The camp of Our divine Lord, we may represent to our minds, as situated in some lowly valley near to the holy city of Jerusalem. In each of these camps is erected a standard, and each general is beating out for soldiers, and calling upon every one to follow him to his particular camp. Let us approach nearer, and endeavour to see what is being done in either. Let us fancy that we are

already in the camp of the mortal enemy of God, the devil: and what do we behold? In the middle is seated, high upon a throne of fire, horrible in appearance, ferocious in look, and with an aspect fierce and terrifying to see, Lucifer, the prince of the demons. He has called around him his associates in sin and misery, that they may know and receive his orders in the coming war. His intention is to destroy the human race, that by losing their souls they may be buried with him in hell. Let us contemplate with the mind of faith that fearful sight, and as we look upon it, let us say to ourselves, "this is no fable, but that which is happening now, even whilst we speak." St. Peter tells us, that "the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."* That we may believe, and not be deceived as to the real sense of these words, let us listen to the discourse with which Lucifer, in a voice hoarse with burning rage and passion, addresses the hellish fiends who follow and obey him. "My object," he says, "is to bring about the ruin of every one of these human souls. I hate them, and desire their eternal perdition. You shall be my ministers and agents. Go forth then into the world above,—disperse yourselves hither and

* 1 Peter, v. 8.

thither into every town, city, and place,—let no country be omitted, fill up every spot and corner,—spare none, let their state in life be what it may : go forth to all, and to each one in particular, seduce them from virtue, and cause them to lose their souls. And in executing my orders, these are the means you shall use. Be artful, and full of deceit. Do not show your true colours, or you may horrify and drive back those you wish to ensnare. Take each man as you find him, and ply him well with promises, which it is needless to say are never to be fulfilled. To an avaricious man, you shall propose the possession of riches as the height of happiness. The proud and the vain shall be honoured, praised and admired, to their heart's content ; and you shall persuade them, that such ought to be their object in life. An impure and lustful mind, bent upon the pleasures of sense, is to be treated differently. For such you will provide plenty to eat and drink, every sort of temptation to the enjoyment of the senses, and the gratification of sensual desires, as the only thing worth living for. And in like manner with all the rest. These are the snares, which are best in the combat with men : take them, and use them. Go forth on your deadly mission."

And now let us turn to the other side. What is going on in the camp of Jesus Christ? See Our Blessed Lord in the midst of His followers, not seated on a proud throne, but humbly, without ostentation, in some lowly place. His camp is in the region round about Jerusalem, which though poor, and ill provided with the comforts of this life, yet seems in perfect order and ably arranged. Our Lord Himself appears standing, with a number of His followers. His demeanour is noble, and His look and person of such surpassing sweetness, as to engage the love of all who behold Him. When He speaks, His voice is gentle and kind, persuading rather than enforcing His commands. Now observe how this, the true Lord of the universe, chooses, from the whole of mankind, a large number of persons, His apostles and disciples, and how He sends these, in company with the angels, into every part of the earth, that they may communicate to all His holy doctrine, and help them to save their souls. And Christ also instructs, with a heavenly discourse, His apostles and ministers before their departure. Let us listen to it. "Behold, O followers of Mine, My beloved servants! behold your mission. As My Father sent Me, so do I send you. My object is to gain all men to My standard,

that thus they may serve My heavenly Father here, and be happy with Him hereafter. To this end have I come upon earth: for this have I lived poorly and neglected thirty-three years: for this have I laboured and travailed: for this have I suffered and died: for this have I given the last drop of My Heart's Blood. If you love Me, go ye and do in like manner. Co-operate with Me in the salvation of souls: work with Me, labour with Me, suffer with Me. Go then into the wide world, penetrate into every town, visit every country, seek out every soul, let nothing stay your steps, let no one be too poor or too abject in your eyes, as he was not in Mine. Invite all to follow Me: and here is the means and inducement to use. Do not conceal from them that this world is a world of suffering, a vale of tears, a place of probation, where men are tried by troubles and afflictions. Declare it openly to them, and say, that it is useless to resist it, that the pleasures of temporal life are fleeting and deceitful. Bid them 'deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow Me:' * but tell them how I shall reward those, who 'leave all things and follow Me;' and if they complain, because My disciples are humble, and must sit down in the last place, remind

* St. Matt. xvi. 24. † St. Matt. xix. 21.

them that it is My Will to 'put down the proud from their seat, and exalt the humble.' * Above all, proclaim to those who are willing to follow Me, that My grace shall not fail them, that I shall permit no one to be tempted above his strength, that when they are trying to bear injuries in silence like Me, when they are praying and fasting, when they are resisting temptations, there will I be at their side to support them. Lastly, take care that all keep in mind their heavenly vocation, which means, that he who suffers with Me here, shall reign with Me hereafter. Behold your vocation. Go forth, then, in My name, and invite all men to My standard." This is the language of Jesus, sweet in tone and gentle in manner, addressed to those whom He selects as His agents and workmen in the holy warfare.

Such therefore are the invitations which we receive, on the one side to follow Lucifer and his angels, on the other Christ Our Lord and Master. Such are the ends of both, such are the means which both severally employ to induce us to follow them. The former comes to us in tones full of deceit, replete with lies: for the devil is the father of lies. Whoever yields to his seductions, will obtain nothing of what he

* St. Luke, i. 52.

desires: a momentary pleasure at most, often none at all, always an unhappy, discontented life, which he ends miserably here, only to commence an eternity of stripes and flames in the everlasting dungeon of the damned. How different Our Lord! humility, poverty, self-denial, patience under suffering, even the love of suffering, crosses without end, troubles in body and mind,—this is what is expected from the followers of Christ, and such a portion will they surely have in this life. Only, bitter as the suffering may be, the fruit is beyond measure sweet and desirable in the life to come. And what is it? To be able to escape the evil of all evils, namely, hell; and again, to obtain by such means an infinite good, to procure an entrance into heaven, where all tears are dried up, where the mourners are comforted, the hungry filled, and the persecuted receive justice—to dwell for ever in the land of the living. O blessed object! O holiest of ends! O of all aims the most worthy, the only one to live for!—But let us pause a moment. And first, let us lift up the eyes of our soul, and picture to ourselves, as though we saw heaven itself open before us. Behold, there sits Jesus Christ Himself at the right hand of His heavenly Father, and about Him is arranged a mul-

titude of heavenly spirits shining with glory and majesty. Who are those, whose places are so close to Jesus? Can we doubt it? Those are His apostles and disciples, who were hunted from one city to another, who were persecuted, and who suffered for His Name's sake. Those again are holy monks, good religious, and apostolical men, who, in perplexities and trials without number, endured all for the honour and glory of God. Others are the martyrs, who died for Christ: others, holy virgins, and chaste spouses, who in patience and silence bore everything for the love of Jesus. There again, thousands upon thousands in the common stations of life, who as they were near Jesus on earth in their sufferings and sorrow, are now beside Him in the glory of heaven. But let us look down once more into hell. Behold the devil in the midst of that fiery pool, writhing in the agonies of pain the most intense, and surrounded by a disorderly crowd of lost souls tortured and damned like himself. And who are those so close to him in hell? O what a change from the scenes of this life! There are the men and women, who, haughty and proud, were once rich and powerful on earth, and whom the world praised and worshipped. Those are they, who spent their lives immersed in pleasure

and indulgence: or those who, if they could not sin in fact, yet did so in desire: those who knew not what it was to master their passions, and subdue their sensual appetites, who resented injuries, and blasphemed when they should have blessed God in sufferings. These followed the invitation of the devil on earth, and now they are doomed for ever to his cursed company in hell. O fearful end of a life of sin!

What a contrast, the end to which the devil leads us, and the end of Christ Our Lord,—the standard of Lucifer, and the standard of Jesus! Who can doubt which he shall follow, under which standard to enlist? To the camp of Christ must we all speed. The road is rough indeed, and strewn with many briars: but what are these to heaven? Shall it be hard for us to bear rash judgment and calumnies, when Jesus was rash-judged and belied? Shall it be hard for us to endure the contempt and scorn of others, when Jesus hung between two thieves? Shall we not put up with an injury, when Jesus forgave His own murderers? Shall we fear to subdue the flesh, and to resist temptation, when Jesus fasted and was scourged for us? “O Jesus, we hate and detest the works of the devil, and in execration of him Thy deadly foe, and for love of Thee, we elect Thee for

our chief, we enlist under Thy standard, never more to leave Thee."

And who can assist us to keep this resolution more certainly than Mary, she who, by original or actual sin, was never under the power of the devil? "O Mother most pure! by the recollection of thy great privilege, help us so potently that we may never more abandon the standard of thy Son, but serve Him till death, that so we may reign with Him and thee eternally in heaven."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Let us pay our spiritual visit to-day to the Sanctuary of Notre Dame de Halle in Belgium. That country is remarkable for the truly Catholic character of the people, and in no way is this better exhibited, than by unaffected attachment and piety towards the Mother of God. This Sanctuary is of very ancient date, and has always formed a favourite pilgrimage to the north of Europe. The richness of the church, and the many offerings, attest the devotion of the faithful; and a great number of incontestable miracles have been wrought at Halle, by the intercession of Our Lady. The Sanctuary is much visited at the present day. Let us, likewise, take a part in the pious work, and

offer up a prayer to Our Blessed Lady of Halle, in Belgium.

PRAYER OF THE ABBOT BLOSIUS.

Hail Mary, hope of those who are in despair, help of the destitute !.....To thee are the treasures of heaven entrusted. Grant, O Lady ! that amid the storms of this life I may always remember thee. To thy charitable mercy, I commend my soul and body. O sweet protector of mine ! do thou direct and shelter me in every hour, and at every moment of my life. Amen.

Eighteenth Day.

ON THE THREE CLASSES OF MEN.

MEDITATION.

It now remains for us to make up our minds, not only to follow Christ, but to do so exactly in the manner He may ordain and indicate. And this is just the very point, where so many well-intentioned persons break down. Not a few are there, strange as it may seem, who imagine themselves saints, for the sole reason that they have been made acquainted with the necessity of saving their souls. Others, again, fancy themselves far advanced in holiness, merely because they have begun to cou-

ceive a high esteem for sanctity. But all these good people are deceived: for there is a wide difference between desiring to change one's life, and in really changing it. It is one thing, to have a great opinion of Christian perfection: quite another to practise it. Nevertheless, this is precisely the very common delusion, upon which the devil most readily works to prevent men carrying out their good resolutions.

That we may not fall into a snare so insidious, we are now going to meditate upon a proper way to *find out* and to *follow up* the means, which may serve us, in redeeming our promises to God.

Of those who listen to the Word of God, and who receive instruction by it, there are generally three sorts or classes of men. The first of these classes consist of such souls as are touched by reflecting on the sublime mysteries of our holy faith, who even desire with ardour to alter their conduct, to live a different life, and to become perfect: but, who unfortunately refuse to adopt any means at all, or who put it off perhaps, till it becomes too late. These, for instance, desire to be humble like Christ, but reject everything that leads to the acquisition of humility. They see how necessary it is to mortify the senses, to subdue a stubborn will, to rein in some disorderly passion;

but as for actually setting to work at it, the thought never enters their minds. They wish to get at once to the top of the mountain, whilst all the time they are staying below at the bottom. In a word, their desire is to receive the reward, without working through the heat and burden of the day.—The second class are those, who entertain in their hearts a real intention to follow Christ; but whose will is cramped, and stingy, narrow-minded and not hearty enough. Such persons make use, it is true, of *some* means towards saving their souls, but not the right means. They give up something, but not exactly that which God demands of them. Convinced of the truth of what they hear, and impressed with the value of their immortal souls, it would be rather discourteous, they think, not to do something for God: but they endeavour, as it were, to come to an arrangement with Him. They will do so much, they will go a certain distance: but further—no they will not agree to that, it hurts their feelings, it is too hard, or they cannot think it is required of them. They try to compromise the matter with Almighty God, to give Him half their hearts, to sacrifice half their pleasures, and to keep the rest, vainly imagining the while that God will be satisfied with this.—The third class of men

comprises all those, who with great earnestness and largeness of heart, are determined to stop at nothing in the service of God, and not only to perform whatever He requires of them, but to suffer and endure all things, and to make use of all means, immediately and promptly, in order to attain perfection. These have made the generous resolve to put no obstacles in the way of divine Grace, and to be ready to make any sacrifice for the love of God.

Such are the three classes of men we are considering: and they are likened—the first, to those sick people, who desire to be cured of their sickness, but who cannot be induced to apply a remedy:—the second, to those who, when sick, are willing to take some medicine, but still not of the right kind, such, perhaps, as please the palate, and are sweet:—the third, those to whom all medicine is acceptable in order to get well, let it be ever so bitter and disagreeable.

And now let us consider these three different conditions.—What a wretched and forlorn state is that of the first class of men! By the light of the Holy Spirit, they have learned clearly what they ought to do, and they even feel inclined to do it: but they never come to the work, they never execute their intentions, and day after day slips by, without change in them,

until death is at the door. What an immense amount of guilt is involved in this ! what an abuse of grace ! what a signal mark of reprobation upon a soul ! to know what one has got to do, to know the reason why it ought to be done, even to feel a desire to do it, and yet idly to fall asleep over the matter, and to neglect making a single step towards conversion. What state of mind can be worse ? Woe, indeed, to the man who knows his duty, and who does not perform it. In one sense, it would have been better for him to have remained in his ignorance : for if the Holy Ghost, in these meditations, “ had not spoken to him, he would not have sin ”* to answer for. After meditating on so many divine truths, after having sought out one’s failings and wants, after so many holy inspirations and divine impulses, to remain still stone-hearted and cold as at first,—who can imagine a condition more pitiable ?—The second class are in a scarcely less lamentable state : for although in itself somewhat more tolerable than the first, yet the fruits it produces carry with them effects most pernicious. Such persons see the necessity of a more correct manner of life : they really hate, in a way, their sins : they have resolved to serve God, by the imitation of Christ : and

* St. John, xv. 22.

they even propose to themselves some system in their conduct—they intend to make use of *some* means: but these means shall be only such as are not averse to their self-love, or hurting to their feelings. Now, what is the result of weakness such as this? That the soul, namely, remains in a state of the greatest danger. Men may not be actually in mortal sin: but unless they give themselves entirely to God, the evil dispositions to sin are never mortified, much less dead. Vanity and the wish to be praised, self-will, and obstinacy in their own opinions, impatience, proneness to anger, and a certain looseness of talk, morose and gloomy behaviour, unfriendliness to their neighbours, all these things are as lively and fresh after twenty years of this half-religion, as they were at the outset. Such habits grow even stronger and difficult to cure, as years roll on: and the way to heaven, far from smoothing down, becomes rougher and more uncomfortable than ever. These people are always in hot water with themselves: and what with want of spiritual energy on the one hand, and scruples on the other, there is no peace or comfort for them. Besides, the good fruit of meditation is quite lost to them, the call that God gave them neglected, grace abused, and the risk they run of eternal perdition is nothing less than awful.

—But how enviable and happy the state of those of the third class, who receive at once whatever means God sends them, and which, after all, is the most efficacious, and indeed the only means towards obtaining the end desired. With great singleness of purpose, and entire indifference to all that may befall them, they await but the commands of God, which are no sooner given than obeyed. Knowing that our God is a jealous God, that He will have no compromise, no half hearts, but the whole or none, they embark with all their might in the great affair of salvation, generously giving up everything to God, and intent only upon discovering what His holy will may be. It is indeed a blessed thing to have abandoned one's self entirely to God, to be ready to do and to bear whatever He may enjoin, never to murmur in affliction, never to grumble, but to find in every discomfort and cross but a means of glorifying God and saving our souls. Such as have brought their minds to His, have provided a heaven upon earth for themselves.

And now for some practical fruit with regard to ourselves. Which of these classes claims us? Have we been touched and impressed with the truths of religion, and yet done nothing towards mending our lives, or desiring somewhat to serve God

and obtain heaven? Have we yet contented ourselves but with a sort of half work, choosing our own remedies, instead of those which God has appointed? Oh, if we are of the first of these classes, let us lose no time in arousing our souls from sleep, let us shake off our torpor, and bear in mind, that we have discovered on examination how heinous our sins have been, that we may yet be punished for our sins, and that as it is not every one that crieth Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, so is something more required than a mere knowledge of sin to admit us into paradise. We must earnestly repent of our past lives, and set so fervently to work that our future may be a reparation for all we have lost in the past. But should we on reflection find ourselves well described in the second class, let us awaken within our breasts some sense of the great danger which threatens us. What, in such a case, have we been pretending to do? To serve God, perhaps, and to save our souls? True: but without any trouble, without suffering or sacrifice. For example, we may have desired to be humble, but at the same time we dislike being despised, we cannot endure a harsh word or an insult; or, we may have aimed at practising the holy virtue of purity, but somehow or other, without thinking that

the first point is to avoid the occasions of sin. In a word, we have been silly enough to try to be good and holy, without taking the means in hand which the Christian religion affords. Now this style of thing will never do. Instead of an imitation of Christ, it is simply mocking Him and deceiving ourselves. No one can follow Christ, without suffering and humbling himself as He did; and in the long run, there is no peace either here or hereafter for those who, if they wish to serve God, and to save their souls, do not seek also to tread in the footsteps of Our Blessed Lord, who, in *all things*, sought to do the will of His heavenly Father. To this third class, therefore, must we endeavour to belong. Let us be generous with God. If He has forgiven us our sins, why should we begrudge Him our hearts? Have we been in sin then, let us not be content with a half conversion, with giving ourselves in part only to God, whilst the devil keeps, perhaps, the larger part of the two. Not only must that which is sinful be struck out from our lives, but the soul should entrench itself, so to speak, in a fortress. The occasions of sin must be shunned, and if hitherto we have indulged, now we must do the very opposite and abstain, not only from that which is wrong, but from indifferent and even lawful things.

Oh, let us follow in those holy footsteps, not as we will, but as Christ willeth, in humiliations with Him, denying ourselves, and suffering with Him until sin has died in our hearts, and the approaches to sin are closed within us.

“And thou, O Mary, most perfect model of all virtue; who, when thou didst listen to the words of Christ, didst also keep them; whose heart was given wholly to God: who, in that blessed saying of thine, ‘behold the handmaid of the Lord,’ didst express the fullest readiness to accomplish the divine Will at all times, and in all places, under every suffering and affliction—obtain for us some portion of the heavenly grace which did enrich thee, that so our lives may be consecrated henceforth to the service of God, and our hearts given to Him without reserve.”

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

All the Sanctuaries we have visited this month are of ancient origin, most of them very old indeed. We now come to one of modern date, that of Our Lady of Dolours, at Foggia, in the kingdom of Naples. Its history is soon told. Foggia is a town of considerable importance and no little beauty, in the south of Italy. In a church of that town dedicated to St. John the Baptist,

there had existed from time immemorial a statue of Our Blessed Lady : but it was not until the year 1837, that this church and the image became a special object of pilgrimage. That year, as every one knows, was one which brought with it the scourge of cholera. Foggia, amongst other towns, was severely tried by the dreadful visitation. Nothing seemed capable of arresting the disease in its direful progress, until Our Blessed Lady, by a wonderful prodigy, which is proved by unexceptionable testimony to have taken place* in the features of the aforesaid image, seemed to intimate that she was willing to lend her powerful intercession in averting the evil. Public processions, prayers, and devotions were immediately instituted : the cholera at once abated, and shortly ceased altogether : and the church of St. John, at Foggia, with its image, became a Sanctuary and a pilgrimage to Our Blessed Lady, and has ever since been well attended. Let us bend our steps there to-day, and in a spiritual visit ask of Mary, that as she was pleased to preserve those good townspeople from a temporal plague, she would keep our souls likewise pure, *that so we may remain untarnished by the universal corruption around us.

* See the Bishop's pastoral;

ON THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY. 179

PRAYER OF ST. ANSELM.

We beseech thee, O most holy Lady, by that favour which God did extend unto thee in so exalting thee, that with Him all things should be possible to thee, that so thou wouldst act, that the fulness of grace which thou didst merit may cause us to be partakers of thy glory. Strive, O most merciful Lady, to obtain us that for which God vouchsafed to become Man in thy chaste womb. Oh, lend us a willing ear. If thou deignest to pray to thy Son for this, immediately He will grant it. It is enough that thou willest our salvation, and we are certain to obtain it. Amen.

Nineteenth Day.

ON THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY.

MEDITATION.

IN a previous meditation, we saw that the root of all virtue is true humility. It is something greater still. Not only may humility be said to be the very foundation of spirituality, but it is throughout also the leading principle and power which should guide us; and as all graces flow naturally into a soul that is humble, so advancement in the interior life is impossible unless through the means of humility. To-day

therefore, we shall consider the three different degrees into which this sublime virtue is divided, that thus step by step we may be able to ascend to the very highest mode of serving God here on earth, and so assure to ourselves the one goodly road to salvation.

The first degree of humility, is to submit one's self to the observance of the divine Law, in such a manner, as to be ready to lose the greatest possessions in this world, even life itself, rather than break any of the commandments of God and the Church, which oblige under pain of mortal sin. In other words, it is to choose to live in the company of Christ, poor, afflicted, and despised, rather than contract the stain of one mortal sin. To put ourselves into this frame of mind, is no easy matter. It is necessary to prepare to resist many attacks from the devil, and his agents on earth. Hence, to move us to it, we have already considered the heinous malice of sin in itself, the severity of the punishment inflicted upon the fallen angels, and upon our first parents, and the dreadful nature of the torments which await those who die in mortal sin. Remembering these truths, we ought to be content under every suffering and humiliation. But the truth is, that we are not. The evil of self-love is so

deeply planted within us, that we are blind and foolish enough to imagine ourselves injured, when any one affronts or contemns us; whereas, the real fact is, that were all the world to combine in a desire to humble us, they yet could not do so as much as we deserve. Cannot God punish our sins? He is infinitely just: but He would not be infinitely just if He did not punish the sinner, as well as reward the virtuous. And, cannot God deal out this punishment in what way He will, by bodily pains, troubles of the mind, or by means of humiliations? Perhaps a good humbling is the most difficult to bear: but when a man has despised the commandments of God by sinning, why should he not be despised himself in his turn? Again, cannot God punish us through any instrument He pleases? David received his punishment through his own son—the disobedient prophet through a wild beast, that attacked him—the blasphemous Heliodorus through an angel—Holofernes through a woman—and Our Blessed Lord Himself was punished for our sins, through the means of an Apostle who betrayed Him. Besides, in reality God punishes sin much more leniently than it deserves. For, supposing the case of one single mortal sin, if he who commits it were to live to the end

of the world, and during that time to be forced to bear every kind of perplexity, annoyance, and humbling, still he would not have endured the contempt which he himself had shown to God by disobeying His law. Hence, if any of us have sinned mortally, let our sufferings and humiliations be ever so great to the end of our lives, the punishment is not nearly as much as we deserve. The first degree of humility is, therefore, to keep these truths well before us, so as to allow them to work every day upon our minds, and thus to influence our daily actions. Come what list in the way of tribulations, God may punish us as He wills, by whom He will, and never beyond what we have richly merited by sin ; and all this together must not induce us to commit one more mortal sin.

The second degree of humility is of greater perfection, and consists in this : that supposing we have already begun to be indifferent as to the means which God sends us to save our souls, taking riches or poverty, honour or dishonour, health or sickness, a long life or a short one, with equal gratitude from His almighty hands ; nevertheless, were the greatest human happiness proposed to us on the one side, or the loss of life on the other, that neither

should induce us to commit, not merely a mortal sin, but not even a venial sin. This is to choose voluntarily to live a life full of suffering, pain, and every tribulation, with Christ, rather than purchase all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world, at the expense of but one venial sin. And wherefore should we not endeavour to live in this way? True, there is nothing attractive in humiliations. They are unpleasant and bitter: but how many things unpleasant and bitter, do we not love and desire, if they only prove useful? To a sick man, to one tortured with pain, what so welcome and delicious as a medicine most nauseous, if only he is sure that by taking it he recovers his health? And when we think of the glorious fruit of humiliations, why should we not love them? Now, what are these fruits? They are twofold. First, a good sound humbling destroys our pride: and nothing is more fatal than pride and vanity. As long as a soul entertains the least self-complacency, the smallest desire to be honoured and praised by men, Almighty God will not rest there. God, in a manner, shuns that soul: He leaves it desolate, without help or light to guide it. What greater misfortune for a poor mortal? Where then is the remedy? Depend upon it, and let us believe it as an infallible truth,

that of all remedies for pride and vanity, the very best is humiliation. As a good shower of rain from heaven is the surest means of putting out a raging fire, so is there nothing more powerful in extinguishing pride as the setting in of a strong stream of scorn and contempt from our fellow men. Again, humiliations well borne possess the valuable property of working humility thoroughly well into our system. In the spiritual life, the greatest blessing and the most certain step to perfection is a real humility. When God looks on an humble soul, He makes His dwelling there, and fills it with grace. An humbled soul is likened to a deep valley: for, in the same way as the waters rush down from the mountain side, and collect themselves in the vale beneath, so do the graces of God fly away, as it were, from the proud and the vain, to take refuge in the depth of an humble soul. What a priceless treasure is therefore humility! And how are we to get at it? What means at command have we? —the example of Jesus. Look upon Him, and learn to love contempt. Our divine Master has taught us the way to the attainment of every virtue: and what way has He pointed out for the acquisition of humility? None other than the road of humiliation and contempt, and a cheerful endurance of the

same. Then why not love this road? If it be our aim to partake of the spirit of Jesus—and if that spirit consist not only in bearing but also in loving humiliations, is there any reason why we likewise, as Christians who wish to save their souls, should not bear and even desire to be despised and neglected? An abhorrence of mortal sin, is consequently not the only thing to be striven after. Venial sin should be hated and avoided, because, after mortal sin, there is no greater evil in existence: because God detests it: because it is the gnawworm which eats away the fruit of all virtue, diminishes our fervour, and disposes to the commission of mortal sin: because the punishment of venial sin is inconceivably great. To make a second step then towards acquiring perfection, we should resolve that not even the slightest and most venial of all the long list of sins, for instance a trifling lie, or a loose word, if by such we could gain the whole world, should ever separate us from Christ, to follow Whom is to love poverty, abjection, and the contempt of men. To live thus, is no doubt a great advance in perfection: but there is something still higher.

The third and last degree in humility, is to be ready to embrace the cross in willing preference to pleasure, that is, putting all

danger of sin out of the question, to have brought one's self to such a point as to love poverty better than riches, contempt better than honours, to receive humiliations with Jesus, rather than be free from them without Him, and this through a greater love for Him, and more earnest endeavours to imitate our Blessed Lord. And high as this state of mind may seem, there is no one who would not aspire to it, if only the great excellence of a desire to be humbled were properly appreciated. Doubtless, to suffer cheerfully and without murmur the neglect and scorn of men, is the most sublime act of virtue conceivable. But nothing is so difficult and rare. The wish to appear important and honourable in the eyes of our neighbour, and the horror of the contrary, are dispositions common to most people. Many a soul can fast and watch, and go through plenty of suffering in the body ; many can pass hours in prayer every day, and put up patiently with much privation, who are not able to bear one harsh or unkind word, still less a downright insult—so deeply rooted is this inclination to honour and esteem, and so hard to eradicate from our hearts. In proportion therefore to the great labour and struggle with nature, which this conquering of ourselves demands, so great and valuable on the other hand is

the offering we make of it to God when accomplished. Then, if we contemplate Jesus, we shall perceive, that not one act did He perform on earth, but what was accompanied by humiliation of some sort or other. He was not always praying, He was not always preaching, He had not even continuously to endure bodily suffering or anxiety: but the contempt and scorn of men He met with, at every step of His life. He was despised and neglected in the stable of Bethlehem, spurned and persecuted in His flight into Egypt, looked down upon as a Boy at Nazareth, laughed at and abused as a Man when preaching, jeered and blasphemed in death on the cross: His doctrine was ridiculed, His virtues mocked and derided, and His miracles contumeliously doubted. Is not the essence of Our Lord's spirit contained, then, in the love of humiliations? and more, can any one possibly, without this love, attain to the spirit of Christ? Oh, surely, it is so much waste of time to seek for Jesus, without looking also for humiliations and contempt: whereas, to bear these things in silence, and with joy, is to have obtained the key itself to the Heart of Jesus.

Such are the three steps, which holy writers propose to us in the work of humility. With a simple and childlike heart,

there is nothing to prevent our aspiring to the third degree of humility. But with sorrow for sin well instilled into us, and with an earnest desire to live as Christ lived, we should conclude, at least, to accept of the worst humiliation rather than commit even the slightest sin.

But how little hitherto have we practised humility! We have made some resolutions, it is true: but they have been feeble and forceless. The first word of contempt from a neighbour, the first sign of neglect from those who should care for us, a sharp answer or a cross look, and all our fancied humility has melted away. How unlike Our Lord, and how far removed from courting humiliations as He did! What has the remembrance of sin been to us? or have we ever really thought of the fearful punishment we have escaped? And where has been our imitation of Christ? Did we not promise to follow Him, however, when we meditated on the "Kingdom of Christ" and the "Two Standards," cost what it might? Oh, may we do so then in future. Let us strive so fervently to be humble, that, to obtain this virtue, we desire to become with the apostle "anathema for Christ"[†]; and so wholly and entirely, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor prin-

† Rom. ix. 3.

cialties, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.”* Towards this object, what so efficacious as the intercession of Our Lady? In all the diversified troubles of our pilgrimage, she is the friend to look to: and for the very love she bears her Son, we enlist her compassion and help. Are we sleeping, she remembers her sweet Babe at Bethlehem. Are we waking, she recollects His thirty years of obedience and toil, and His three years of apostolical labour. Are we young, His childhood is before her. Are we old, she bears in mind how He was wont to attend His reputed father. Are we living retired, she is reminded of His life at Nazareth. Travelling, she reverts to His many journeys. When persecuted, what so like it as the murder of the holy Innocents, or the flight into Egypt? The learned are the picture of Jesus disputing with the doctors. For the ignorant, they are the poor of Christ: and the rich recall those riches of grace, which flowed from her Son, more precious than gold. Our Lady has then a heart for all. And shall we not take our place there, sinners though we be?

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

We are going to try to be humble, to accept our humiliations as the best road to humility and to union with Christ. What more pleasing to God and His Holy Mother? But there are numerous obstacles in the way. Let us, with heartfelt devotion, implore her assistance in this arduous encounter.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

The cathedral church of the ancient city of Chartres is a Sanctuary of Mary, perhaps the best, certainly the longest known in France. From the earliest ages of Christianity, a temple which stood in this spot, and which now serves as the crypt of the cathedral, had been placed under the invocation of Our Lady. It immediately became a favourite object of pilgrimage. Nothing could exceed the piety of the middle ages towards this noble Sanctuary, and for many centuries the Catholic sovereigns vied with each other in zeal for the honour of Our Lady of Chartres. Of course, the French Revolution in some measure diminished this devotion: but it has since been revived in a wonderful manner. So lately ago as the 31st of May, 1855, a mag-

nificent ceremony took place at Chartres, for the purpose of solemnly crowning Our Blessed Lady of Chartres. A number of bishops were present, one cardinal, and a large concourse of the faithful. The Bishop of Poitiers pronounced a glowing panegyric on the Blessed Virgin, and the occasion was celebrated with a pomp and enthusiasm that may be said to have rivalled the ages of faith. How beautiful, to behold so Catholic a living witness of the consecrated tradition of happier days ! Our Lady of Chartres is therefore little less to-day, than she was of old. Let us make a spiritual pilgrimage to that blessed shrine, and by a prayer full of unction, take some humble part in the glorious restoration.

PRAYER OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

O Blessed Mary, who is worthy to give thee thanks, or to sing thy praises—thou who, through the assent of thy free will, didst come to the help of the world that was lost by sin ? Holy Mary, succour those who are in misery, give help unto the weak : be thou a comfort to the afflicted : pray for the people and the clergy : intercede for the devout female sex : and may all who invoke thee, experience thine assistance. Amen.

Twentieth Day.

ON THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST IN HIS AGONY.

MEDITATION.

Not seldom does it happen that those who having meditated on the divine truths, full of zeal and fervour, are yet not sufficiently grounded in true religion to have force to withstand the assaults of the devil. These assaults present themselves either in the flesh, or through temptation to pride. Consequently, with a view to counteracting them, we shall now reflect awhile upon the wonderful mystery and example of Christ during the last moments of His life on earth : and to-day, our meditation shall be, the inward sufferings which Our Lord went through in His most bitter agony in the garden.

Now, in order to bring such a subject more home to our minds, let us view in imagination the scene which that garden presents. Our Lord and His disciples having sung a hymn, as the holy Gospel informs us, leave their last supper-table to repair to the Mount of Olives. We may fancy the sun just sinking beneath the

horizon, and as the golden tints which play upon the towers and houses of Jerusalem, become gradually fainter and dim, the twilight yields gently to the total darkness of night. The air is calm and serene, with a sultriness, however, peculiar to that climate. Not a breath is abroad, to disturb the solemnity of the awful moment we are going to contemplate. Nature itself is hushed in expectation. Our Blessed Lord, accompanied by His disciples, walks slowly and silently down the little path, which leads from outside the walls of the city to the garden of Gethsemani, and having crossed the brook of Cedron, He turns upwards to the Mount of Olives, which is to be the place of His sufferings. Often had Our Lord spoken of His approaching death and passion: but He had always done so with such calm and quiet, that it was impossible on those occasions to remark in Him the slightest fear or sorrow. Scarcely, however, has He entered the Garden of Olives, than He is overtaken with an agony such as it never fell to the lot of man to endure. Terror and a trembling fear are upon Him, and full of anguish He exclaims, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."* And now He separates from His disciples, retaining three only at some short distance.

* St. Matthew, xxvi. 38.

He will be alone, quite alone with His heavenly Father. He falls on the earth, and prays, "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." The combat rages more fiercely every moment, until at length blood gushes forth from His pores, as sweat from the body, "and His sweat," says the Evangelist, "became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."* The anxiety of death is sometimes able to draw forth a heavy perspiration: but only in the most terrible cases. What then must have been the death-struggle of Jesus, to have pressed from His Sacred Body a sweat of blood! Who can understand it, or which of us can ever experience it? We may gaze however upon the deep extremity of His soul, and as we sympathize with Him, learn also a lesson from His agony.

The first pain which Our Lord had here to endure, was an immeasurable degree of grief and sorrow. And the cause of this sorrow was double in its nature: first, because of His burning love for us, for never did mother love her only child, as Jesus Christ loved every single one of us poor men; secondly, because to Him was given the knowledge of all things, and well did He know that the greater part of men would lose their souls notwithstanding all

* St. Luke, xxii. 44.

His sufferings. Oh, when Jesus beheld with His all-seeing Eye, the thousands and millions of men who in future ages, heedless of Him and His blessed doctrine, would rush headlong into the abyss of hell, how great must have been the sorrow inflicted upon Him!—so great, that this thought alone would have sufficed to induce His death.—Another pain, which Jesus suffered, was the fear of death. Lest any one should wonder at this, let him bear in mind that Our Lord suffered in His *Manhood*; and although God, uniting together in His One Person the Natures of God and Man, that yet He was not exempt from suffering. He suffered, therefore, exactly as He would have suffered, had He been but a simple man like one of us. And what more fearful than the approach of death? The expected separation of our soul from our body, even on an ordinary bed of sickness, is a feeling replete with dread and horror. What then would it be, were it now announced to us, that to-morrow, in the presence of the whole population of a city, we should be delivered over to die a cruel and ignominious death? So was it with the soul of Jesus, only far more terrifying. For never has mortal man been able to place before his eyes, in all their vivid colours, the direful circumstances of his

coming death as Jesus could and as Jesus did. Amid the gloom of night, and in that lone place to which He had retired, the horrifying realities of His Passion presented themselves with appalling force. Image after image rose up before Him, the various scenes of suffering through which He was about to pass, and His persecutors, the kiss of Judas, the courts of Pilate and Herod, the way to Calvary, the spot itself of His crucifixion, the ferocious mob, the wretches whose blaspheming cries were to be His death-warrant, the ruffians who were to nail Him to the Cross—all were disclosed as strikingly to His mind, as though those scenes were already being enacted: and for a long three hours, "His soul was sorrowful unto death."* Alas, the martyred Heart of Jesus! In very exhaustion He has fallen to the ground, and the Precious Blood runs from every pore. So bitter is His chalice, that doubtless then and there He would have died, had not an angel from Heaven come to comfort and refresh Him, that thus He might be enabled to consummate His sacrifice on the cross.

Such was the agony endured by Our Lord in the garden of Olives. But were these the *only* sufferings of that agony? No, surely. Our reflections are but passing

* St. Mark, xiv. 34.

thoughts, which rise up almost involuntarily as we gaze upon Jesus. Who can enumerate the thousand sorrows, infinite in degree, infinite in measure, which crowded together upon His Blessed Soul? But, so brimful is each in itself with matter for meditation, that the few ideas we have touched upon will amply assist us towards the end in view. Our object is to strengthen the determination we have made to serve God more fervently than before, and to help us to maintain our constancy, though surrounded by every perplexity, though forlorn, though desolate, in anxieties and mortifications of all kinds. Look then upon Jesus, behold His sufferings, how great are they, and how steadfast is He in the midst of them. On the other hand, how small are our afflictions, and how great our impatience to rid ourselves of them. Jesus lies immersed in an ocean of bitterness, sorrow, and sadness, disgust and loathing, fear and anguish. His Sacred Heart is tossed about upon a sea of grief. And amidst this storm, what may we behold? The highest and most perfect constancy. Never, for a moment, does He cease to pray and to lift up His hands to heaven—never does His love abate for God or men—never a moment, in which He is not accomplishing the Will of His heavenly Father—not proposing to act, but

acting always, and in continued preparation for the cross. That is to love God in earnest: that is to remain faithful in desolation and trouble: that is, in real fact, to seek for nothing here below, but to fulfil the Will of Almighty God. And what a contrast to us! Our sorrows are of small account beside Thine, O most mournful Jesus! And yet how soon we lay down our arms, and give up the battle! With resolutions, valiant and loud-spoken enough, we enlisted in the army of Christ, and promised to follow Him "whithersoever He goeth." "If it should be necessary for us to die with Him," we were never to desert Him. Come trials, come humiliations, come anything, it should be all the same to us: for no man was to separate us from Jesus. And thus we go out into the hard world. But the first rebuff, or injurious word, and all our valour falls to the ground. Then follow thick upon one another, laziness at our religious exercises, omissions of all the little mortifications we had laid upon ourselves, disgust of prayer, and soon, remissness in all our duties, with an entire want of confidence in God. Oh, what a mean, what a small faith! Jesus is innocent, without blot or sin, and yet His soul is sorrowful unto death. But in the very depths of His sorrow He is constant and calm, and fulfils

to the last the Will of His heavenly Father. We are sinners, who have long ago deserved hell, and yet we desire nothing but consolations, we can never bear to be opposed or contradicted ; and when any one abuses or insults us, or chooses to think lightly about our behaviour, we are all at once in a flame, as if we had not deserved it, and perhaps a great deal more. What blindness, what infatuation, what a manifest deceit of the devil !

Let us then humble ourselves before God : for he only is a good Christian, who is ready to serve his Creator in all things, and under all circumstances, be they pleasant or otherwise. But no man is able to do this of himself. We must therefore lift up our hearts to heaven : we must look upon Jesus in His agony, and as this example will doubtless animate us, we must beseech Him, the Author of all grace, that He would have mercy upon us. To walk justly before the face of the Lord, in the midst of trouble and anxiety ; to persevere eagerly in prayer, though surrounded by a thousand distractions and the bustle of life ; to keep on diligently in our exercises ; to love God so above all things, that nothing, however bitter, shall separate us from Him ; to have our hearts full of sorrow, and bent down with affliction—and yet to be always gentle

and kind, forgiving and friendly to our neighbour: oh, how beautiful are these virtues! for therein consists all that the Church and the saints recommend us of mortification, and abnegation of self. Such is a real humility, such is a real detachment from creatures; and such is it, to persevere to the end trusty and constant in the service of Almighty God. But to so sublime and generous a state can no one attain, without a special grace from above. "Oh, grant us that grace, most loving Lord! and may the sight of Thine agony in the garden remain continually before our eyes, that when tempted to fall back and forsake Thee, the recollection of Thine intense sufferings may revive our fervour and preserve us in faithful love and attachment to Thee, to the last day of our lives."—But if we commence our conversion late, if we leave off again by sin, if we are inconstant and weak, who, on the other hand, began so soon, who ever continued so long faithful to the last, as Mary the Mother of God? Mary had but one soul with Jesus. Her soul clung to His, and every pang that pierced His Sacred Heart, found its counterpart in hers. And should not we likewise cling to the Heart of Jesus? Should we not so unite ourselves with Our Blessed Lord, as not only to suffer when He suffered, but to bear

those sufferings as He bore them, and for His love? No one can assist us more efficaciously in this, than Mary, "Mother of Jesus, Queen of Martyrs, help us therefore to sustain our troubles, that, imitating thy blessed example, and supported by thine intercession, we may learn to keep our resolutions of serving thy Son, without failing under what trials soever that assail us."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Marienzell is a celebrated place of pilgrimage, situated in that part of the Austrian dominions called Styria. It lies in the bosom of a wild range of mountains, which are remarkable for exquisite beauty of scenery. A wonderful and holy influence presides at this Sanctuary, where, even to the present day, Almighty God is pleased to work miracles as frequent in occurrence, as they are undeniable in fact. The church of Marienzell is the largest and handsomest church in Styria, and the shrine of Our Blessed Lady is a richly ornamented chapel within this church. The image which is here venerated is about seven hundred years old, the date also of the Sanctuary itself: and before this image are many lamps burning, all of solid silver, the gifts of the

devout servants of Mary. The chapel, and indeed the whole church, is loaded with riches, the votive offerings of pilgrims, some of them presented by imperial, royal, and noble personages—for many centuries in continuance, as heartfelt tokens to Mary. Nor do they cease at present: every year adding to the number of jewels, gems, and golden ornaments of immense value, which enrich this holy place. How brightly does love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin burn, in the hearts of those good and earnest Catholics! It is computed that about eighty different processions of pilgrims proceed annually to Marienzell, from various parts of the Empire of Austria. These commence generally about the first week in May, and continue till the end of September. There are two grand processions, one from Vienna in July, and another from Gratz, which arrives at Marienzell on the 12th of August. But all the pilgrimages are well attended; and the total number of pilgrims that make their yearly visit to this sacred spot, is thought to be over one hundred thousand. What a blessing to live in a Catholic land! And for us, what can we do but make our spiritual pilgrimage thither, and by additional fervour in our devotions at home, emulate in a small way the beautiful exercises in honour of Mary, which are now

being held in her chosen Sanctuary of Marienzell.

PRAYER OF ST. BONAVENTURE.

O Lady.....do thou rule and govern my heart like thine own: preserve it in the Blood of the Lamb, and place it in thy Son's Side. Then shall I obtain what I desire, then shall I possess that which I hope for: because thou art our hope. Amen.

Twenty-first Day.

ON SOME OTHER OF THE SUFFERINGS
OF CHRIST.

MEDITATION.

It is impossible to remain firm in the resolution of converting ourselves to God, and of serving Him with constancy, unless likewise every effort is used to acquire a great patience. Now patience is a virtue, which inclines the will to support tranquilly all adversities. It is brought to bear chiefly upon a state of poverty and destitution, or when our honour is injuriously attacked through the bad conduct of others, when illness of the body afflicts us, or in death, or else when the internal quiet of the mind is disturbed in some sort of way. All these

things ought to be borne in patient silence, or even with a holy joy as becomes the followers of Christ, and if possible with a desire to suffer even more, after the example of Our Lord on the cross, remembering well, that however much we endure here, our sufferings are as nothing compared to those of Christ, nor yet to those of the martyrs and other saints. Of all the means towards obtaining this blessed virtue of patience, the most assuring and stirring is the contemplation of what Christ went through before us. It is a large subject, and so large and boundless, that many books might have been written, and have been written upon it, without exhausting the copious fund of thoughts that flow down that sacred stream. Hence in our meditations for this beauteous month, we can do little more than draw forth such ideas, as may prove necessary for the course we propose to ourselves. Contenting our minds, therefore, with the few lessons we have been able to learn from the manner in which Christ suffered inwardly, all through His hidden and public life, we shall pass on cursorily to consider for our instruction the sufferings which Christ underwent in His Sacred Body during His Passion and Death.

One thing is certain, that no man has ever suffered bodily, nor can he ever suffer,

that which Christ Our Lord endured in His Body. Bear in mind the first circumstance, which characterized these sufferings. They were common to His entire frame, and not confined to one limb or part only. Look to Jesus as He hangs upon the cross, wander with the eyes of faith from one limb to another, from His head to His feet, and see if there remains one single part which is not covered with pain and torments inconceivable. His cheeks are swollen with the blows and cuffs He has received. His mouth is parched with thirst, and tortured with bitter drinks. His hair and beard have been pulled and torn. His eyes are bloodshot, and cruel thorns have penetrated on every side, the flesh, the nerves, and muscles. See, then, how much suffering in that Sacred Head alone!—To proceed further. The arms, the breast, and back are lacerated with the strokes of whips and scourges. The skin is cut and bruised, and large pieces of flesh have fallen out, so as to expose in some places His very bones to view. But still more: rough and deadly nails have pierced through and through His hands and feet, the nerves of those limbs being either rent asunder or strained to the farthest tension. His bones are disjoined and broken, and the entire of His Sacred Body is one great wound, one mass of blood

and livid flesh. What man has suffered like to This? The Prophet Isaias speaks as follows of Our Blessed Lord suspended on the cross:—"There was no beauty in Him, nor comeliness: and we have seen Him.....the despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity: and His look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted."*

The second peculiarity, which marks the sufferings of Jesus, is their intensity, so that no one ever has, or ever will, undergo the same. And the reason is twofold. First, because of the extreme delicacy and tenderness of the Body of Christ; for, as St. Bonaventure assures us, the very hardest part of that Body was far more tender and sensitive, than the most delicate portion of an ordinary human frame—to wit, the pupil of an eye. Secondly, because the most sensitive members of His Body were precisely those which were tortured the most. Oh, who can conceive the keen intensity of the pain which must have thrilled Him, as those long, cutting thorns were placed upon His Sacred Head, and

* Isaias, lili. 3, 4, 5.

mercilessly pressed down, inches deep, through skin, flesh, nerves? Who can describe the agonizing pangs which must have shot through His entire frame, as one after another, His blessed hands and feet were severally laid hold upon, a huge nail planted in the midst of each, and then savagely hammered at, until, tearing aside bones and muscles, it imbedded itself in the hard wood of the cross? Can we not see Our Blessed Lord lying ignominiously on the ground, stripped of His clothes, covered with wounds, and preparing for death? His murderers have just driven the first nail into His sacred hand, and, with a natural emotion, He has sprung up convulsively with His body towards the martyred limb, but again He is pitilessly dragged back to His previous position, to endure the same in another part; and so on to the end. Who can rightly fancy the full amount of Christ's sufferings at that moment? What then must it have been when, their bloody task completed, the wretches who surrounded Him, having raised aloft the stalwart cross, struck it down with a heavy jolt into the place prepared for it! Nor can any one tell us what the pain must have been, when the whole weight of His tender Body lay suspended

by rending nails from that cross, for three long hours together. O the awful intensity of the pains of Jesus !

The third circumstance which attended His sufferings, was the total absence of alleviation or refreshment. Hour after hour did He hang upon the cross. His Blood, till within some few drops, was spent and gone, and horrible thirst began unmercifully to beset Him. He begs a drink—and what slight comfort, a drink of water, for one in so extreme an agony—yet even this little they grant Him not. Instead of water, they bring Him gall and vinegar, that, in the same manner as He had gone through all other sufferings without relief, so now should He pour out the last drop of His Blood without a hand to help and console Him.

These are some brief considerations upon the Passion of Jesus : and as we revolve them in our minds, and turn our eyes towards His holy Cross, what are we to think or say to ourselves ? If a sinner, such as we, had undergone all these sufferings by way of penance and satisfaction for his own sins, however great, we might yet be astonished at the extent and intense-ness of that punishment. But Jesus had no sin, for guile was not found in His mouth : nor could He sin, as He was holi-

ness itself. Why then did He suffer?—For our sins. Yes, Faith teaches us so. On account of all our sins taken together, and because of the sins of each one individually, Jesus was bedewed with a sweat of Blood in His agony in the garden: on this account was He scourged: for this was He mocked, and insulted as a fool: for this did He die as a malefactor on the cross. “O most loving Jesus! what goodness, what mercy is this!” Had we a thousand tongues, could we thank Him enough for so great a love? Let us then begin to fill our hearts with gratitude and affection: to thank Him perseveringly for the outpouring of His Heart’s Blood, for each of His Sacred Wounds, for the blows and ill-treatment He endured, and for all the contempt and ridicule He received till death. This is one fruit to draw, from the contemplation of Christ’s sufferings. But there is another not less practical, and that is, by looking well into the recesses of those Wounds of His, to learn there to suffer. We may well thank Jesus unceasingly, that He has offered Himself a sacrifice for our sins: but He did not this only. Jesus prayed, indeed, but suffered too: and if we would truly thank Him, we must also suffer.

Behold that venerable Head, in what has it sinned, to have been pierced throughout

with thorns? What sins have those beautiful eyes committed, to be disfigured and bloodshot so? Look upon those almighty hands and feet, what have they done, to be wounded with those sharp, unfeeling nails? Heart of Jesus, full of love, how comes it to be run through with the thrust of a lance? Jesus is innocent, and everything belonging to Him is innocent. His head is guiltless: for never did an evil thought enter there. His eyes are guiltless: for their look was virtue itself. His tongue is guiltless: for never did it utter a word, but to the greater glory of God. His hands are guiltless: for never were they stretched forth, other than to bless and to heal. His Heart is guiltless: for it was always full of the most perfect love to God and man. Why then does He suffer? For our sins: not for His own. Our sins have scourged Him—our sins have torn Him—our sins have nailed Him to the cross—our sins have killed Him. And, unhappy creatures, after we have done all this, we still wish to have nothing to suffer; whilst to be true, there is in the world no pain or sorrow, which we have not richly merited long ago, there is no torment in the depth of hell itself, which would have been too much for our sins.

“Have we not reason, then, O good Jesus! as we contemplate Thy sufferings,

to resign ourselves patiently to Thy blessed dispositions in the midst of all our anxieties and troubles? Oh, truly we have, and truly we will from this hour forth. We place ourselves, therefore, in Thy hands confidently and without reserve: for it is just and right that we should suffer."

Now, turn awhile to Mary. Did she not suffer? In truth did she—and how? As it was fitting that the Queen of Martyrs should suffer. And when? Through her whole life; for as an angel revealed to St. Bridget, "as a rose grows up amongst thorns, so did this Blessed Virgin grow up amongst tribulations."* How, then, did she bear them? With the most invincible patience. Compassion alone for Our Lord's sufferings, sufficed to make her a martyr of patience. But what Mary must have endured, when present at the death of Jesus on Calvary, is ample evidence of the constancy and sublime character of her patience. "There stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother."† Then was it, precisely by the merit of her unwaning patience in suffering with her Son, that as the blessed Albertus Magnus teaches, she brought us forth to the life of grace. If, then, we desire to be children of Mary, we must imitate her patience: for what, says St. Cyprian, can

* Serm. Aug., cap. xvi.

† St. John, xix. 25.

enrich us with greater merit in this life, and greater glory in the next, than the patient endurance of sufferings? "O Mary! we, therefore, place ourselves under thy sheltering wing, to witness there the image which the patience of Christ reflected upon thy soul, and to secure besides thy help: for thou art the 'Comforter of the Afflicted,' and the 'Remedy for all sorrows of the heart.'"—"Mary, Mother of God pray for us."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

The great pilgrimage of latter times has doubtless been, and is still, the Sanctuary of La Salette, near Grénoble in France. Most Catholics are acquainted with its history. For our own edification, however, it will not be amiss to refresh the memory upon the main points connected with it. In the autumn of 1846, two shepherd children were tending their flocks on the mountain of La Salette, when Our Blessed Lady appeared to them, and addressed them for some time in tones of distress and sorrow. She complained chiefly about the prevailing sins of this age, such as cursing and swearing, desecration of the Sunday, and contempt for the laws of Holy Church; and after sending a warning to her people,

through the children, she signified to them that, unless they (her people) were converted, a very heavy punishment would fall upon them. These two poor children immediately made known their vision, and the message they had received, and through a long series of searching examinations and questioning, spread over several years, they have proved beyond a doubt the truth of their story, which, from the first, they told with an accuracy never-failing and clear. The consequence of this apparition has been twofold—1, the conversion of the entire neighbouring populations, for many miles around; and 2, an extraordinary influx of pilgrims to La Salette, which has since become a Sanctuary of Our Lady. The Supreme Pontiff has done everything consistent with the dignity and prudence which characterize the Holy See, to promote the devotion to La Salette. Hence, the many indulgences accorded to those who enrol themselves in the Confraternity of La Salette, or who make this holy pilgrimage. Let us then enter heart and soul into this devout practice. And as we bend our steps thither to-day, and as we tread our way in spirit through the crowd of Mary's votaries, let us exclaim heartily in the words of the invocation, "Our Lady of Reconciliation

of La Salette, pray for us sinners, who have recourse to thee."

PRAYER OF ST. ALPHONSUS.

O most sweet Lady of mine, thou, who being innocent, didst suffer with so much patience! and shall I, who deserve hell, refuse to endure sufferings? My Mother, I now ask thee this favour, not indeed to be delivered from crosses, but to bear them with patience. For the love of Jesus, I entreat thee to obtain at least this grace for me from God: from thee do I hope for it with confidence. Amen.

Twenty-second Day.

ON THE CONTEMPT AND IGNOMINY
ENDURED BY CHRIST.

MEDITATION.

As Pride is the root of all sin, so is it likewise the door by which the devil is always seeking to re-enter our souls, and to regain what he may have lost. Many good people entertain the noblest desires of amendment, and make generous resolutions for the future: but many also, not having rooted out the vice of pride from their hearts, as easily fall back into the old way

of sin. Trusting too much to themselves, they commit perhaps one of their former sins, and becoming thus discouraged, return to the same course of conduct as before. And holy writers declare that there is no means so certain, so moving, so efficacious, to prevent this, as meditation upon the Passion of Our Lord. Again, therefore, we shall make some reflection upon those sufferings, which Christ endured during the last moments of His life on earth.

It is not possible to collect together into one chapter all the numerous ideas, which naturally arise in a Christian mind, when thinking upon the insults offered to Jesus, many and various as they were. Some such, however brief they be, may yet prove advantageous.

The first kind of insult, which Christ had to endure, was the false accusation brought against Him. To a man of upright and virtuous mind, what can come heavier or more trying than to be accused of crimes which He never even contemplated, much less committed? And if it be so with ordinary men, what must Christ have felt as He stood in the courts of Annas and Caiphas, and heard Himself accused of misdeeds the most abominable and revolting in their nature? Listen to the blasphemous accusation. He was a dissipated

character, said the false witnesses, one who kept company with public sinners, and loved to eat and drink at their tables. He was a man proud and haughty, who had given Himself out as a God. His doctrines were wrong and godless, and productive of sedition amongst the people. He worked miracles by the power of the devil: and so forth. Such was Jesus declared to be, in the council chamber of the high priest; such was He accused of, before the judgment seat of Pilate; and as such did they proclaim Him, through the streets and lanes of Jerusalem.

The second kind of insult, which Our Lord had to suffer, was the great contempt and ignominy which His persecutors heaped upon Him. It was not enough, to accuse Him of blasphemy and of seducing the people: He must be treated likewise as a fool. Behold Him in the presence of King Herod, undergoing every sort of contumely and scorn, because it was not His blessed Will to perform some wonder, at the beck and nod of that cruel king. A fool's dress is put upon Him: and thus, amid the insulting cries of a mob, who shower down upon His sacred head every kind of abuse which their venomous spleen can invent, He is led about the town to be derided and mocked by the entire population. And

the scene is reacted soon after in the house of Pilate, where the brutal soldiers, set on by the Jews, devise a scheme for insulting Jesus so malicious and fiend-like, that it must have been prompted by the very demons in hell. They throw an old purple garment over His bare shoulders, they put a reed in His hand for a sceptre, a crown of thorns upon His head, they strike Him, they spit on Him, and mockingly bend the knee to Him, as the Evangelist relates to us. And whilst this is being done, and whilst the whole court of heaven is looking on with astonishment, the pains and sufferings of Christ are enhanced by the jeering laughter and yells of the approving multitude outside.

The third kind of insult, which Christ must needs endure, was the ignominious manner in which He was condemned to death. Pilate the governor led out Jesus, of Whose innocence he was already convinced, before the assembled people, and with Him Barabbas. "Whom will you that I release to you," did Pilate exclaim, "Barabbas, or Jesus that is called Christ?"* and as he pronounced these words, doubtless Pilate expected that their choice must fall on Jesus. But no: Barabbas, the blood-thirsty criminal, the murderer, is loosed,

* St. Matt. xxvii. 17.

whilst Jesus, the Son of the Living God, must die. And how must He die? Death is dressed in many forms, all themselves horrible and shocking. And to which of these is Christ condemned? To the worst and most painful of all—to the most ignominious of all; for none but the lowest malefactors were condemned to the cross. He must die, again, in a disgraceful position, between two thieves, that all may know (O blasphemous thought!) the greatness of His crimes. Such was the choice of the people, and such the judgment of Pilate. And thus does Jesus proceed on His sorrowful way to Calvary, amid the gratulations of the high priests, loaded by the Pharisees with mocking sarcasm, and seared by their cutting irony, whilst the rabble hoot and an innumerable body of people press around to goad Him onwards, and to cover the Most Holy One with all manner of vindictive insult. Then was the word fulfilled, which the Prophet spoke of Christ. “I am made a derision to my people, their song the whole day long.”*

And let us pause awhile, and ask ourselves a few questions. First: was the sentence of the Eternal Father unjust, when He condemned His only-begotten Son to a fate of such unheard-of ignominy and contempt?

* Jerem. Lament. iii. 14.

Who can say it? But Jesus had no sin. Therefore, in the words of the Prophet, "He was wounded for our iniquities, and He was bruised for our sins,"*—and our sins have caused all this. Secondly: bearing in mind that our sins have deserved this punishment, do we imagine that the Eternal Father would act unjustly towards us, were He to condemn us to endure as much contempt and ignominy as His own Son endured? Surely not. It is certain that we have sinned: but the punishment which sin deserves is also certain, as Christ suffered for sin: therefore, no one has a right to grumble, if, to say the least of it, his punishment is only like to that of Christ. Thirdly: as we believe that sin deserves the same amount of contempt and ignominy as Christ endured, and as we know perfectly well that we ourselves have sinned, does it not argue an insufferable degree of pride to take offence at every little affront fancied or real, to give way to impatience under every ailment, or not to be willing to put up with some trifling insult for the love of Christ, Who endured so much for us? Oh, what a shaming thought! We, who are but men, full of blindness, weak and helpless—we set up for something great, we aim at being considered wise, prudent, and

* Isaiah, lili. 5.

clever—and Jesus the while is clothed in a fool's garment, and led about as the laughing-stock and scorn of the whole world. We, being full of sin and imperfection, yet desire to be honoured and esteemed, whilst Jesus is reputed a seducer and blasphemer. We, whose souls are possessed of no one single virtue,—we wish to be praised and preferred before others, not remembering that Barabbas also was preferred before Jesus, and that Jesus died an ignominious death on the cross. Must not such a pride be hateful in the eyes of God? Surely. But how common: so common, that it were hard indeed to find a soul perfectly ready to receive insults and contempt with Christ. Where are such souls? People busy themselves about everything in religion, except this. They practise everything. Plenty of fasting, and no end to the praying and devotional exercises. But when it comes to bearing an injury in silence for the love of Christ, and thanking God that we have been accounted worthy to suffer in His Name,—this is a burden, which but few shoulders can fit themselves to. Nevertheless, there remains a truth which never can pass away, namely, that the example of Christ is the only way to heaven: and we may rest assured, that he who does not follow cheerfully this example, is of small

account in the eyes of Our Blessed Lord, and without hope besides of attaining to perfection. Oh, how far above human wisdom is the doctrine of Jesus Christ! In His sight, nothing so beautiful—nothing so loveable, as humiliation and contempt. But one word was required of Him, and He might have received as much honour as otherwise He received scorn and insult: but that word He would not pronounce, because His heart loved to be despised and insulted rather than honoured. And this is what the Royal Prophet tells us, speaking in the person of Our Lord, “But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and as a dumb man not opening his mouth. And I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth.”* And what was Jesus? Was He not all powerful? Could He not have called down a legion of angels at that moment from heaven? One word was but necessary, and all men would have acknowledged His divinity, and the whole city of Jerusalem adored Him as their long expected Messias. Did He not know all things? Did He not know how His enemies would abuse this silence of His? Well did He foresee, how on that account His blessed Mother and His beloved disciples would have to suffer inward anguish and insults

* Ps. xxxvii. 14. 15.

innumerable. Well did He know all that would therefore be advanced in proof against His doctrine, how it would be ridiculed and despised, and His newly formed Church persecuted. But, all these weighty reasons could not move Him, to say one word in His own defence. He was silent, and silent to the last moment of life. "O Jesus! O wonderful Lord Jesus! what an astounding silence is this of Thine! how sublime, and how replete with great lessons for us!" But few there are who take them. And are we amongst that few? Most likely not. But why should this reproach stand against us any longer? Let it not be so: for God now teaches us, that as pride leads to hell, so does humiliation and the contempt of men point towards heaven. Let us allow this truth to penetrate deeply into our hearts, to fix itself there, to become part of our system, a second nature, that so the profound lesson in humility, which Our Lord's Passion discloses, being ever before our eyes, we may be prepared at all times, when the sin of pride assails us, to revert to so divine an example, and thus repel the tempting allurements. "And Mary, Mother of Christ, help us to this. Thou seest how weakly and foolishly we are always quarrelling and bickering, answering and contradicting one another, never content unless

we obtain what we call our rights, never acknowledging ourselves wrong, although in truth often so ; how we are eaten up with conceit and vanity, the very victims of pride. But now, we earnestly desire to be rid of this slavery. O help us then, great Mother of God, that by bearing all injuries silently and with cheerfulness, we may thus become the faithful followers and servants of Thy Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Altætting is a small town, in the southern part of the kingdom of Bavaria. It is remarkable as a place of pilgrimage, and thousands of holy souls repair thither annually to the shrine of Our Lady, known as the Black Virgin, situated in a church which stands in the centre of the principal square. The outside of the church itself is covered almost entirely with votive paintings, representing various miracles performed by Our Lady of Altætting, and within, its walls are lined with more costly offerings of gold and silver plate, arranged in cases, consisting chiefly of models of limbs upon which cures have been wrought. Over the high altar, in a circular recess, are placed the figures of the Virgin and

Child, which are objects of the highest veneration. Both images are of a dark complexion, and it is certain that originally they came from the East. The richest decorations, in gold brocade and precious stones, cover the images from head to foot, and as these have now been accumulating for a period of twelve centuries, since the year 696, when the Sanctuary was founded, they furnish in themselves a plain evidence of the extraordinary love and veneration, with which our forefathers in the faith were actuated towards the Mother of God. The hearts of many princes of Bavaria, are deposited in this Sanctuary; and the names of the most distinguished pilgrims, from the Emperor Charlemagne down to Pope Pius VI., are recorded on the tablets. Mary has indeed had a home at Altætting: and is it not a comfort to look back through so long a lapse of time, and find one's self a member of that same old Catholic Church, which, whilst it ever freely gave to God the supreme honour which was due to Him, has never feared to bless and revere the most beautiful and perfect of His creatures? Let us praise God for granting us so glorious a privilege, and lest we endanger the precious deposit of our faith, by not practising it, let us make a pious journey to-day to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of

Altætting, and there in spirit sing her praises and invoke her holy and time-honoured name.

PRAYER OF WILLIAM OF PARIS.

O Mother of God, I have recourse to thee, and I call upon thee not to reject me, for the whole congregation of the faithful calls and proclaims thee the Mother of Mercy. It is thou, who, being so dear to God, art never but graciously heard. Thy clemency was never wanting to any one, however enormous his crimes. Never shall it be said that the Mother of God, who for the benefit of the world brought forth the Fountain of Mercy, denied her mercy to any sinner who had recourse to her. Thine office is that of a peacemaker between God and man : permit, therefore, that the greatness of thy compassion, which is greater than my sins, should move thee to help me. Amen.

Twenty-third Day.

ON THE GREAT LOVE WHICH CHRIST DISPLAYED TOWARDS HIS ENEMIES.

MEDITATION.

WHEN a Christian finds on examination, that he has so far prevailed with himself, as to receive an injury with cheerfulness, and to bear an insult, or many, for the love of Christ, there is sure evidence that an important progress has been made in the interior life. One step more however presents itself, to which we ought all endeavour to attain, and that is, not merely a willing readiness in enduring every sort of contempt and ignominy, or even the preferring it before honour and praise, but that, when the former of these do happen, far from tarnishing in the smallest degree what love we owe our neighbour, they should be able, on the contrary, to awaken our hearts to a still greater love and charity for those who have injured us. In plain words, this is what is meant by the "forgiveness of injuries." Many good persons consider they have done a great deal, in remaining silent under insult, when they have not recriminated, when they have repressed the feeling of resentment which naturally arises

on such occasions. No doubt they have. It is not a human, but a Christian sentiment, which bids us suffer injuries. And thus far, they have imitated Christ. But is this enough? Not quite: for Our Lord has said that not only must we "forgive them who trespass against us," but likewise, that the way to forgive our enemies is "to do good to them that hate us."* This lesson we must learn. Let us then in spirit repair together to the hill of Calvary, and study somewhat more closely the scene which is being there enacted. It is on Calvary, that we shall learn how to forgive injuries.

Behold Our Blessed Lord hanging upon the cross, His body one entire wound, His Precious Blood running in streams. His pains are inconceivable, and death is near. In three hours hence, He will expire. And from Jesus, look down upon the hill of Calvary. . See, there are many thousands assembled, old and young, high and low, Jews and Heathens, Scribes and Pharisees, the chiefs of the people, and the high priests—an immense and motley crowd of many nations, ranks, and stations. Few amongst them have any sympathy for Him. All the rest are sworn foes and enemies, who hate and detest Him. Mark well that fearful sight: see Jews and Gentiles ming-

* St. Matth. vi. 12. St. Matth. v. 44.

ling together in accursed union, and swayed by the passions of hell, how they stride up and down in agitation and anger. What the prophet foretold of them has come true: they are "as a boiling sea which can find no rest."* And in the presence of this scene, let us enter into ourselves, and consider how hard a thing it would have been for us, to have loved such a herd of barbarous savages.

In the first place, we must never forget, in contemplating the Passion, that Our Blessed Lord was not a man only, but God and Man, Who had the power to look into the hearts of every one present. With this idea well in our heads, let us call to mind what Christ is witnessing before Him. Some are rejoicing with the whole power of their souls, as they behold Him stretched upon the cross. "At last, at last," cry they, "have we seen the day, which fulfils our long wished desires." Others are making their remarks upon the sentence of Pilate, how just it was, and how right, that a blasphemer and seducer of the people should die such a death upon a cross between two thieves. These men are joyful over His sufferings, and when gall and vinegar is given Him to drink, they only laugh and sneer the more. If a man is seen to be in

* Isaiah, lvii. 20.

the agonies of death, let him be a murderer or other criminal on the eve of being executed, a feeling of compassion possesses naturally the souls of the bystanders. However great his crimes, then at least they extend some pity to him. But very different is it with Jesus. The more cruel His torments on the cross, the fiercer the rage and fury of His enemies. Passing to-and-fro under the cross, they wag their heads and blaspheme Him, saying, "Vah, Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save Thyself: if Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." In like manner others cry out mockingly, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. . . . He trusted in God: let Him now deliver Him, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God."* And Jesus must listen to this, and much worse concealed behind it in the hearts of so many thousand men, in those for the love of whom He had come down from heaven, for whom He had worked so many wonders, and for whose salvation He was then dying on the cross.

Secondly: let us remember the hard-heartedness of the enemies of Christ. What signs had they not before them, what warnings, enough to move and to soften hearts of

* St. Matt. xxvii. 40.

stone. Jesus, in the midst of such sufferings, forgives them, and prays to His heavenly Father for them. The very elements are bearing testimony to His innocence: for the heavens are overcast, and the sun darkens, and the earth begins to quake and to open. All this is clear before them, and do they cease to persecute Jesus? No. To the very last they insult Him, curse, and blaspheme Him. It might have in some way consoled Our Lord to have been able to foresee, that at least, when dead, they would no longer insult Him. But no: for well did He know, that most of those present at His death, would deride and mock Him the more afterwards. He knew that His apostles, who were to preach and announce His Name, would be persecuted and martyred. And worse than all, He knew that many, many would persevere in their hard-heartedness, and thus be condemned to hell. O unfortunate souls: what must it have been to love them! But Jesus did love them, and loved them till death, crying out in His agony, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*—And let us look into the very depths of His forgiveness and love. What moment did Our Blessed Lord select to pray for His enemies? He had many anxieties on the

* St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

cross. His heavenly Father must be prayed to for help and support. He had to speak with His Blessed Mother, to commend the beloved disciple, and in Him the whole Church, to her care: and again, He must address Saint John. Then there was the good thief and the bystanders, from whom in His extremity He must needs beg a drink of water. But none of these did Jesus speak to first. His Blessed Mother must bide her time, the beloved disciple must yield his place, Our Lord's own sufferings are forgotten. The first word, which Jesus spoke on the cross, was a prayer for His enemies. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Besides: might not Christ have waited, until His persecutors had at least shown some disposition to repent, until they themselves had begged for pardon? Surely would He have done so, had His love been less deep than it was. But far other was the love of Jesus. He loved and forgave them in the very midst of His agony, when they were in the very act of cursing Him and blaspheming, at the very moment He was experiencing the worst of their passion and malice. Who can conceive a greater or more heartfelt love? And this is to be our lesson in the forgiveness of injuries.

Now, look to ourselves. Of what kind are our enemies, whom we find it so difficult to love? Perhaps some false witnesses, who have been publicly accusing us of abominable crimes? Perhaps those, heartless and cruel, who when we were sick have poured gall and vinegar down our throats? Perhaps blood-thirsty ruffians, who, did it lay in their power, would nail us to a cross with Jesus? None of these. Who may they be then? Our enemies are persons, who have perchance made some passing remarks upon us, true and just enough no doubt. Our enemies are those, who have perhaps spoken sharply to us, or rudely, or who do not seem to hold a very high opinion of our conduct,—or who are merely cold and unkind in their behaviour. Is not this true of the greater part amongst us? Were our enemies like those of Christ, there might indeed be some excuse for us. As it is, are we not ashamed to confess that we cannot love those who do us a little injury, when Christ so loved His murderers? Yet such is the fact. But now we have regarded the sublime example, which He has given us: we admire it, and praise it. Let us follow it: and if it appears difficult, and almost impossible—our enemies are so trying and unbearable—let us turn again towards Jesus. He had the same obstacles, the

same impediments in His way, only greater, in proportion as the wickedness of His enemies was great and overpowering. And how did He meet it? "Father," He exclaims, "forgive them, for they know not what they do;" as though He might have said, "My Father, I say not that they are without sin: but their actual malice is less than it appears. There is much ignorance therein, or surely they would not have acted thus towards Me. Therefore, My Father, forgive them, as I forgive them: love them, as I love them." O wondrous love of Our Lord Jesus Christ! Look reverently at those sweet forgiving eyes of His, and learn the secret of so great a love. What saw He in His enemies, that could draw His Heart to love them? He saw in them the weakness of human nature, by which from childhood they were naturally prone to sin; and therefore did He love them, and had compassion upon their infirmities. He saw in them an immortal soul, which God had created after His own image and likeness, and which He had called to everlasting happiness; and therefore did He love them, and desired not that one amongst their number should, on His account, be lost and deprived of eternal life. He saw in their conduct the wise decrees of His heavenly Father, Who had so disposed

that His chalice should come to Him by their hands ; and therefore did He love and receive from them everything in good part. This was the secret of Christ's forgiveness on the cross : and this guide must we also take in our dealings with our neighbour.

“ And Mary, wilt thou not help us in the holy struggle ? Thou didst stand by the cross of thy Son till the last, thy soul was knit to His, and didst thou not therefore join in every feeling and throb of that Sacred Heart ? Well, then, knowest thou how to forgive an injury. Oh, assist us in the practice of this glorious virtue, by the union, we pray thee, which thou didst contract with the loving and forgiving Heart of thy divine Son.”

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

One of the most striking and picturesque places in the whole of France, is the episcopal town of Le Puy. It has been well known for many centuries, as a Sanctuary of Mary. The image which forms the object of attraction to pilgrims is seen in the cathedral, which is a very large and curious edifice. The present image dates only from the commencement of this century, the ancient one having been carried away or destroyed in the old French Revolution. The former image, which was of cedar wood,

and swathed in papyrus, tradition proclaimed to have been the handy work of the early Christians of Mount Lebanon, and to have been brought to Europe at the time of the Crusades. The faithful of the Middle ages had a great veneration for Our Lady of Le Puy, and many popes, kings, and distinguished visitors are recorded as having made their orisons at this favoured shrine. The devotion is well kept up at the present day, and numerous pilgrimages are not unfrequent. On an entablature in the Sanctuary, may be seen inscribed the names of twenty priests, who suffered martyrdom in this neighbourhood during the Reign of Terror. Le Puy has had a singular privilege granted to it, that whenever, namely, as the saying goes, Our Lord falls in the lap of Our Lady, that is, when Good Friday occurs on the 25th of March, a grand jubilee is allowed to be proclaimed at the Sanctuary. This happened so late back as 1853, and the immense concourse which were drawn from all quarters on that day to the holy spot, was at once astonishing and consoling. It has served surprisingly, towards reviving the pristine devotion of Our Lady of Le Puy. Let us praise God for His mercies, and in spirit make a devout pilgrimage to that sacred shrine.

PRAYER OF SAINT ELEUTHERIUS, BISHOP OF
TOURNAY.

O Virgin, thou whom we praise for so many reasons, whom we have the happiness of venerating, hear thou our prayers, and lend an ear of favour to our petitions. Thou, who in becoming a mother, didst yet remain a Virgin—pray thou to the Lord that He may give us constancy, that He may grant us patience, that He would please to unite us together in a strengthening concord, that He would increase the mutual support which we give one to another.....Pray for us, that we may become a perfect light, that we may praise thee in the glory of thy Son, to whom belongeth honour and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

Twenty-fourth Day.

ON THE PRACTICAL FRUIT TO BE DRAWN
FROM THE PREVIOUS MEDITATIONS.

MEDITATION.

WE now arrive at a point in our meditations, upon the proper deciding of which very much, if not all, depends. The question is, whether having learnt to know Our

Blessed Lord more intimately by a closer study of His blessed life on earth, we can yet so fix our minds as to follow Him step by step through the weary track of our pilgrimage, in desolation and sorrow of heart, in pain and infirmity of body, dishonoured and despised, or hated even and persecuted by men. He that possesses not courage to tread this path, will never find peace or happiness here or hereafter : and still less will he ever arrive at that pure and perfect love of God, which is the main object of our meditations, and the end of our whole life. And yet this road of sufferings, rough as it may seem, is the very highest road that a soul can take : for Christ walked in it—and who will say, that He has not chosen the most perfect way to holiness? Besides, so many and valuable are the fruits which accrue to a soul through suffering, that it is also called with truth the most useful road to heaven. It is the road the saints went : and they had their crosses like us, the same passions to overcome, and the same battles to fight : and they found by experience that this road of suffering, was the very shortest road to a lasting union with God. Again, it is the surest road, the road where least we can go astray : for many souls have been deceived through spiritual consolations and lights, but never

one by suffering. In suffering, the noblest virtues are brought out, and grounded firmly within us: and in that short word "suffering" is contained the pith and marrow of the following of Christ, that which He Himself has taught us in His divine doctrine and example, the road where all are safe, and where no man can err. Having comprehended these truths, and revolved them well in our minds as the precious fruit to be drawn from the preceding meditations, let us go on farther and consider the various means, by use of which we may be enabled to bring these thoughts practically home to us, in the everyday circumstances of our lives.

The first point to observe is the necessity of frequently retravelling the ground we have gone over, that by a constant repetition, these holy maxims and truths may thus take forcible hold, as it were, upon our imagination and will. And what again are these maxims, in regard of a life of suffering?

1. That in order to obtain God, we can never suffer as much as we ought to suffer: for supposing that, for a thousand years long, we had to endure every malady and trouble which this world presents, yet should we not have suffered that, which the infinite malice of our sins deserves.
2. We can never suffer as much as Christ suffered for us.

3. We can never suffer as much as our sins have merited : for what suffering of this life is comparable to the fire of hell ? And these truths we must bring to bear, whenever there comes an opportunity of suffering, whether in body or mind.

The second point is a cheerful endurance of all those little trials and annoyances, which daily cross our path, that by such means we may obtain a greater heart for suffering. Whenever anything of this sort happens to us, we should recollect the following. 1. To recal to our assistance, some one of the maxims and truths we have heard explained. 2. Immediately to offer up the matter to God, by an earnest act of resignation and love. 3. To remain silent, and to abstain from uttering complaints, from fretting and grumbling.

The third point consists in offering one's self as a sacrifice to God, under whatever suffering we may be called upon to bear, be they heavy even or of long endurance. With this object in view, we should endeavour to practise the following. 1. Every morning on rising, to resign ourselves without reserve into the hands of Almighty God, and having made an earnest act of conformity to the divine Will in all things, to renew this act frequently and fervently throughout the day. 2. Never to murmur

at that which God disposes, or needlessly to complain about the shortcomings of other men. 3. In all trials and vexations, to await with patience the time which Almighty God has appointed for our deliverance.

“And is this all?”—we may say to ourselves. After going through the different stages of Christ’s blessed life, after admiring His perfect conformity to the Will of His heavenly Father, His wonderful love for men, His patience amid sufferings the most atrocious—after having blushed for shame at the sight of our own sins, at the contrast of our souls beside the Soul of Jesus—after having determined to turn generously to God, and to do what we can to imitate Our divine Master—is this really all that God requires of us? A few sterling maxims, with which to feed and nourish our spirits; a little patience, when the perplexities of daily life are pressing upon us; an offering of one’s-self to God, under the more toilsome and heavier of our burdens? Yes, all. Having first been sorry for sin, and performed what the Church enjoins, these short rules comprise the whole secret of penance and interior walking with God. How easy then to follow Christ, how cheaply we may secure eternal salvation! And is not our God a good, loving, and forgiving God, to be pleased to accept of this mode of doing

penance for sin? Oh, who is there who will refuse to thank the heavenly Father, that if the road to innocence is no longer open to us, He has prepared and pointed out another road, safe, secure, and easy, by which to attain the great end of life—the road, namely, of suffering? Who, that has committed but one sin, will refuse to walk it, and be glad even that so valuable a chance is yet left him? Jesus has suffered torments and insults without number and immeasurable, and all this He has endured for us. “For us were those wounds that tore Thee: for us was the Blood that flowed from Thee: for us was all that agony and pain, all the contempt and ignominy Thou didst endure. And we believe in this, and yet have never loved Thee! O patient, O loving Jesus!”——But whence has this indifference, this coldness, arisen? The answer is clear. We have not loved Jesus, because we have loved ourselves too much. We wish to have nothing to suffer. All shall be pleasure and enjoyment. We are in love with our wretched selves, and there is no love left for Christ. But must it remain so? Are we never to be mortified, never to make up our minds to suffer in this world, in silent patient endurance, for the love of Christ? We might perchance have been now burning in hell: and can we

not suffer a little annoyance on earth? We have deserved, perhaps, to have been given over to everlasting despair in hell, and shall a trifling amount of affliction and grief be too much for us now? We are those, who mayhap might have been the object of furious curses and blasphemies to all eternity, and must we now be displeased because our fellow-creatures despise or neglect us? Might we not at this moment have had our dwelling-place amongst demons and damned souls, and is it too great a hardship to have to bear with the weakness of our neighbours? Oh, no: for praise be to God, we have learned how Christ loves suffering, how suffering is the only road to heaven, and again, how true are those words of Our Blessed Lord, "take my yoke upon you.....and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is sweet, and my burden light."*—"We turn therefore to Thee, O Christ: To whom shall we go, O Lord? Thou hast the words of eternal life.† Help us to love and serve Thee, and to suffer with Thee."

"And Mary, Mother of the Lord our God, Guide of the wanderer here below, faithful Help to those who have lost their way, succour us, and pityingly befriend us.

* St. Matthew, xi. 29.

† St. John, vi. 69.

We are yet sighing in this vale of tears : but with the memory of thy Seven Sorrows fresh upon us, our courage is renewed, and our energy receives new life. Most truly are we suffering and in trouble, but what is this, but the tracking over that dolorous way, which thy Son and thou did track before us? When we pray to thee for help, then recal thou the remembrance of thy sufferings on earth—think of that seven-pointed sword which pierced thy Heart, of thy quickened flight to Egypt, of the loss of Jesus in the Temple—think of thy meeting with Him, as He was being led out to death—think of the scene on Calvary, of how they opened His side with a lance, whilst thou didst stand by and see it—think of thy grief and affliction through this, and how thy cup of bitterness was filled up in the burial of thy Son Jesus. And Mary, our Mother, pray sometimes for us, as thou knowest how to pray : pray that the grace which supported thee in this world, and permitted thee scatheless and pure to suffer on to the end—that some portion of that grace may descend into our hearts, that so we may imitate thee on earth, and bless thee for it one day in heaven.”

• VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

Milan, the see of St. Ambrose and of St. Charles Borromeo, and the capital of Lombardy, has ever been noted for its fervent devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Amongst the Sanctuaries of Our Lady in that glorious old Catholic city, is one which can boast of a higher antiquity than even the beautiful Gothic cathedral. It is called "Santa Maria presso San Celso," or the church of "St. Mary beside St. Celsus:" and thither in pious spirit we shall bend our steps to-day. It is related in the life of St. Ambrose, that the holy bishop having gone outside the city for the purpose of translating the body of the martyr St. Nazarius to the Church of the holy Apostles, and the blessed relics having been taken out of the ground and laid on a bier, there was revealed to St. Ambrose the presence of the body of St. Celsus, who in the earliest ages of the Church had also suffered martyrdom for the faith. The body of St. Nazarius was translated: but that of St. Celsus was suffered to remain, a small oratory only being raised over the sacred spot, with a painting on the wall of Our Blessed Lady holding the Infant Jesus in her arms—just such a one, as one sees nowadays by the roadside

in the Tyrol or in other Catholic countries. Not long afterwards a church was built in honour of St. Celsus, yet without destroying our painting, which gradually became an important object of devotion to the people. We hear of it again in the tenth century, as firmly maintaining its position in the popular favour ; and about the year 1430, Philip Mary Visconti, Duke of Milan, erected a chapel which he decorated munificently, and founded besides five chaplaincies to serve it. In 1485, an astonishing miracle occurred there ; and partly on that account, partly because it was notorious that many struck with the plague had been miraculously restored to health before this sacred image, and partly again on account of the costly oblations of the people, which poured in abundantly, a new church was commenced on a scale of great richness and magnificence, for which there are certainly few parallels in history. It was to this church that St. Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, directed the third and most solemn procession of the clergy and people, during the terrible pestilence which afflicted that city in 1576 : and on the occasion mentioned, he took the opportunity of strongly recommending and enforcing upon his hearers a fervent devotion to the most merciful of mothers. How beautiful, to behold these

two great saints linked hand in hand, at a distance of so many centuries, believing the same truths, and actuated by the same veneration and lively devotion to the great Mother of God! Oh, if men but knew the beauties of the Church of Christ, and what it was to belong to it, how soon would enter its holy pale all who are now without it! Therefore must we pray for them : and to-day, where can this better be done than amidst the timeæval reminiscences of Milan, a city as constant and faithful as ever in its attachment to Mary? One heartfelt prayer therefore within the noble cathedral, and then in spirit to the church of Santa Maria presso San Celso, where mixing with the holy throng who are making their Month of Mary, we shall confidently ask Our Lady to have pity on us, and by her prayers to bring back all strayed sheep to the one fold of Christ.

PRAYER OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

All hail then, O Mother.....the jewel of our Church, its glory and its strength. Do thou entreat without ceasing thy Son Jesus, Who is also Our Lord, in behalf of us ; that through thee we may find mercy in the day of judgment, and that we may arrive at the possession of that which is prepared for such as love God, by the grace and goodness of

Our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be glory and honour and power, now and for evermore. Amen.

Twenty-fifth Day.

ON CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

MEDITATION.

THE subject of our meditation to-day will introduce us to a series of thoughts and scenes, widely differing from those that have hitherto occupied us. We are going to contemplate the great mystery of Christ's Resurrection. But, in order to understand the end and object of this meditation, it is necessary to reconsider, in a cursory manner, the whole order and drift of our previous reflections. We began this month, if we remember, by pondering upon the last end of our life on earth; and as we searched and examined our consciences, to see how far we had strayed from that course, we made a resolution that, cost what it might, we should never allow anything to come between us and God. Three things, however, were necessary to the attainment of that end, and all three we have already meditated upon. The first was the purification of the heart from sin, and the killing

within us of a disposition to sin. But as, in the attainment of our end, it is of small concern to detest our sins, without being likewise actively employed in the service of God, we determined also upon following Christ, and practising the virtues which are pointed out by His blessed example and doctrine. But again, forasmuch as these virtues cannot be put in practice, without encountering many difficulties, without the surmounting of many obstacles, and a total abnegation of "Self," we therefore placed before the mind some striking points in the Passion and Death of Our Blessed Lord, and resolved to follow and imitate Him even in these. Now, when a soul has well reflected upon all this, and drawn thence its practical and lasting resolutions, there remains but one step more to the full and perfect love of God, the possession of which is nothing else than our last end and aim on earth. To-day, therefore, we begin a few short considerations upon the love of God. And as the door or entrance to this sublime subject, we shall meditate first upon the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, that, by the contemplation of such happiness and glory, we may learn to despise this earth, to hold all temporal sufferings as of light account, and, by strengthening ourselves in the decisions already come to, that thus we

may prepare for a perfect enjoyment of the friendship of Almighty God.

Contemplate, in the first place, the contrast between Jesus suffering and Jesus glorified. Great and frightful as were the sufferings of Christ, so great and ravishing is the glory of His Resurrection.

Our Lord rose from the dead with a body of wondrous beauty. To understand this properly, it is well to think of the following:—1. The glorified body of a saint or angel is of such transcendent brightness, that, compare it with the brightest stars—the sun itself—and they are dim beside it. 2. Suppose that God were to infuse into one single soul the entire glory and beauty possessed by all the saints and angels united, yet would this be as nothing in comparison to the glorified Body of Christ. And that Body, recollect, is the very one which, three days before, was so ill-handled as to be no longer recognizable. That shining face is that which, three days before, was covered with gaping wounds and smeared with offal! O glorious change!

Our Lord rose from the dead, with a measureless amount of joy in His soul. If the bitterness, which that soul endured in the Garden of Olives, had been poured into as many souls as there existed men upon earth, certainly would it have caused the

death of every one without exception, so deep was that sorrow. And, in like manner, if the joy which Christ experienced in His Resurrection had been apportioned amongst the whole number of created beings in the world, can we doubt that all would have died for the great excess of joy? Who can ever sound the depths of that joy?

Our Lord rose from the dead, with His honour and majesty restored in all its completeness, and infinitely magnified. And what a change is this! Jesus is now and evermore the glory and happiness of the angels, those angels who descended from heaven with canticles of jubilation to witness the triumph of His resurrection. Jesus is the joy of the patriarchs, who, prostrate before Him, acknowledge Him as their deliverer. He is the Judge of the living and the dead, in whose presence must all appear for their final sentence. He is the crown and reward of the saints, who, from henceforth to all eternity, will praise and bless Him. And who is this Jesus? That same in truth Who, three days previously, had been clothed in a fool's garment—that same Who was insulted and derided as a mocking—that same Jesus, Whom three days before, the Jews had scourged as a male-

factor and nailed to the cross. O wonderful revulsion of persons and things !

Our Lord rose from the dead, with the perfect possession of a universal love. To imprint this thought upon our minds, let us pass by that intense love with which the angelic spirits must have burned on that day towards Jesus, also that of the holy patriarchs and prophets of the Old Law, who, with thankful gratitude, must have bowed to the adorable Heart of Jesus. Let us fix our eyes on heaven alone, and remember that there, to all eternity, never will there be a moment in which the whole choirs of the elect will not thank Him and praise Him, in which they will not love Him in the tenderest manner.

Now, as we think of these things, ought we not to pause a moment to rejoice with Christ at His great glory? We have watched with Him at Bethlehem, we have dwelt with Him at Nazareth, we have followed Him in His public life, we have mourned with Him, and sympathised with His sufferings : shall we not now be with Him in His happiness and glory? Oh, truly. Eternal praise, therefore, to the Eternal Father, Who has dealt out such glory to His only begotten Son : eternal praise to that Son, Who, having fought so valiantly for the honour of His Father, is

now rewarded above all: for His Soul is immersed in happiness, His Heart is a sea of delights, and His Name is high above the heavens, and the only name by which we can be saved. "O Jesus! it is right and just that Thou should receive this crown. Mayest Thou wear it in glory and majesty, to everlasting ages."

But a thought for our poor selves. Having regarded the glorious condition of Christ in His resurrection, let us try to draw thence some heavenly truths for our own use: and the first that occurs to us, is that which the Apostle announces in his second epistle to the Corinthians,* where, speaking of the sufferings of Christ, he says "That He Who raised up Jesus, will raise us up also with Jesus," from which we derive this consoling reflection, that as certainly as Christ rose triumphantly from the dead, so surely shall we thus rise one day, if only we follow Him on earth. So that the abiding hope of a future resurrection is placed in us by God, to be trusted in, and to support us through life. And how beautiful, how comforting a doctrine is this! with these our eyes, to behold at last the heavenly Jerusalem; with these our hands, to be able to touch and feel the sweet presence of Jesus; with these our very ears,

* 2 Cor. iv, 14,

to listen, one day and for ever, to the celestial harmonies of the angelic choirs above; with this our own mouth in the flesh, to taste and to drink in delights unknown and undreamt of here! O costly truth! Who would not follow Christ, to see it fulfilled? Again: as surely as Jesus attained to the glory of His resurrection through cross and sufferings, so is there no other means to the same glory for us, as the cross and suffering. St. Paul tells us so plainly enough:—"a faithful saying," writes the Apostle, "for if we die with Christ, we shall live also with Him; if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."* Is not this a solace and support for us? for when we have risen gloriously from the dead, where, in truth, will have departed all our earthly contradictions and sorrows? O happy pains!—shall we rather cry, O happy contempt and insult endured for Christ! O thrice blessed suffering of every kind, which has led us to the enjoyment of so great a happiness! Once more then, the more conformable are we to Christ in suffering on earth, the more like shall we be to Him in the glory of His resurrection. And the Apostle has a word for this also: "knowing," he says, "that *as* you are partakers of suffering, so shall ye be

* 2 Tim. ii. 11 12.

also of the consolation."* We learn thence, that the more we suffer with Christ on earth, the greater shall be our joy and comfort with Him in His resurrection; the greater amount of neglect and abuse we undergo here in His name, the greater honour and glory shall be our portion in rising with Him.—And what, after all, are these sufferings? what are the anxieties and the sorrows of life, the scorn of the world, and the tears and the sadness of earth? Are they not the most loving ordinance of God, the strait road to holiness, the fair inheritance which we receive from Jesus Christ, the pledge of our resurrection, and the best assurance we could have of an immortal crown hereafter? Why then be sad and unhappy about them? Why not rather lift up our hands to God, in thankfulness and gratitude at His great mercy to us?—Further: who are those who hate us and lead us a life? Are they not in reality the very instruments of God's own love: those, through whose means we may become saints, who are to make us like unto Christ, who are to cause us to rise gloriously with Him, and reign eternally with Him. In truth is it so: for such is the teaching of Jesus. And these are the people, whom we have esteemed our enemies! A great truth

* 2 Cor. i. 7.

then has lain hidden from our eyes—so let us discourse with our own souls: for if it be true—and who will doubt it?—that God rewards every little suffering with a corresponding glory and happiness, how many thousand such rewards have we not lost through our own self-love and impatience! If it be true—and who will doubt it?—that, after we have risen from the dead, God will reward every humiliation, every insult and scorn endured for Him, with a crown of glory in proportion, how many such thousand crowns have we not lost through our pride and vanity! On the one hand must we weep therefore at our past folly—but looking hopefully towards the future, let us rejoice also, because Christ being risen and having entered into His glory, we are likewise called to enter there in His blessed company. “O Jesus, let it be so, that having followed Thy steps upon earth, we may become participators of Thy kingdom hereafter.”

But Mary, the Mother of Jesus—she has accompanied us, condescendingly throughout all these considerations—she has followed her Son in all the journeys and troubles of His bitter life—and shall she not have part with Him and with us, as we rejoice in His glorious resurrection? Let us turn and congratulate her, in the joyous words

of Holy Church :—" Be glad, O Queen of heaven, alleluia, because He whom thou didst deserve to bear, alleluia, is risen, as He hath said, alleluia." Let us pray. " O God, who didst vouchsafe to gladden the world by the resurrection of Thy Son Our Lord Jesus Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, that through His Virgin Mother Mary, we may attain to the joys of eternal life. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen"

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

The Sanctuary of Georgenberg, near Scwhatz in the Tyrol, has existed since the year. 992. It is built upon the summit of a singular looking rock, of a great height, and so entirely isolated as to require the transit of a bridge as the only secure means of passage from a neighbouring hill. An ancient image of the Mater Dolorosa stands in the church ; and there are many votive tablets, some of great simplicity and piety. This Sanctuary receives the annual visits and homage of thousands of pilgrims, from all parts, but chiefly from Germany. The church of Georgenberg is served by monks of the Benedictine order, the great body of whom are settled in their more recent and magnificent monastery of Viecht in the plain below. These good religious keep up

the liveliest dévotion to Mary. Let us go thither awhile, and pay a fervent spiritual visit to the mountain Sanctuary of Our Lady of Georgenberg.

PRAYERS OF ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA.

The following is the touching practice, which St. Aloysius adopted every day in honour of Mary.

First.—Three Hail Maries to the Blessed Virgin.

Secondly.—This invocation, “O Holy Mary, by thine immaculate conception, thine unspotted virginity, and thine admirable motherhood, obtain for me purity of soul and body.”

Thirdly.—The 116th Psalm, in thanksgiving for all the graces bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin. “Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people. Because His mercy hath been confirmed upon us, and the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever. Glory be to the Father, &c.

Twenty-sixth Day.

ON CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

MEDITATION.

THE object of our last meditation was not the purging of our souls from sin, nor yet the inciting ourselves to a more constant imitation of Christ. Intimate union with God is the legitimate fruit to be obtained, from meditating on the glory and majesty of Jesus in the mystery of the Resurrection. And by the consideration of the great contrast, which Christ, suffering and Christ triumphant present to the mind, we are encouraged and confirmed in the love, which we had already begun to feel towards Almighty God. What we are now about to consider, is only another degree in the same order: for the history of Our Lord's admirable Ascension into heaven conducts us to the very threshold of that kingdom, where all is love, and concord, and perfect union with God. Briefly, therefore, let us go over the facts relating to Christ's ascension.

Our Blessed Lord had remained with His disciples for the space of forty days after His resurrection, instructing them,

“speaking of the kingdom of God,”* and “opening their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures.”† Appearing to them for the last time, as they sat together at table in an upper chamber, He ate and discoursed with them in the most amiable and loving of ways. And having delivered His last instructions, and commanding them “not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father,”‡ that is, the coming of the Holy Ghost—“He led them out as far as Bethania,”§ that is, by the same path they had trodden before, on the eve of His passion, to the Mount of Olives. The holy Scriptures do not inform us, in what manner it pleased Our Blessed Lord to walk His last walk with His beloved disciples, whether He merely caused them to be conducted by an invisible power, or whether He actually blessed them with His own divine presence in the body as they went. We may piously assume the latter, and believe that He walked out in their company, just as He used to do before His passion, with this difference, however, that He may have been visible only to them, whilst the eyes of other men were held that they should not see Him. It is evening, as the meal has been already

* Acts, i. 3.

† Acts, i. 4.

‡ St. Luke, xxiv. 45.

§ St. Luke, xxiv. 50.

taken: yet not so late, but that the sun has some few hours to run in its course. The full power of its majestic influence is therefore still felt upon the sacred landscape, and the domes and turrets of the holy city are lighted up in all their magnificence, whilst the vast masonry of the encircling walls beams again with the golden hue which plays upon it. Christ Our Lord, followed by His little troop, issues forth from the gates of Jerusalem, by that same gate, probably, which they had passed some weeks before, on a more sorrowful occasion. And by that same winding path, may we now see them bending their way once again, to the well known familiar scene. The apostles are half downcast, half joyous: but by the grace of God, the latter is the feeling uppermost in their hearts, which are now more spiritualized and more ready to receive the Holy Spirit. Our Lord, in all the dignity and majesty of His resurrection, is speaking to them words of comfort and hope as they walk along. Soon they have passed the brook of Cedron, where, no doubt, a momentary sigh escaped them, as the place recalled its doleful remembrance. Then through the garden of Gethsemani, and onwards to the Mount of Olives. And there Our Lord and His followers halted, in the very scene of His bitter agony and

bloody sweat. How fitting, indeed, that the great act that was then about to be accomplished, should take place where He had suffered most on earth—that the garden and mount, which bore witness to His abasement and sorrow, should be likewise the spectators of His exaltation, and of the completion of His joy. O holy mount, O blessed garden thus sanctified by Christ! But Our Lord has already turned to His apostles, and, as the tradition tells us, has admitted them to the last farewell, in a reverend kissing of the Sacred Wounds in His hands and feet. And it came to pass, that while they were embracing Him, “He blessed them, and departed from them, and was carried up into heaven: and they adoring went back into Jerusalem, with great joy: and they were always in the temple, praising and blessing God.”*

And now, let us endeavour to derive some wholesome reflections from the facts we have just repeated.

With the mind of faith, let us contemplate, in the first instance, the whole number of men upon earth at the time of Our Lord's ascension, and let us see which amongst them are those whom He chooses to witness this august spectacle. Behold Jerusalem, the rich and the gorgeous, look

* St. Luke, xxiv. 51, 52, 53.

at the numberless other cities and countries throughout the world, Rome the capital, and the magnificent cities of the East. Consider the many thousands that dwelt within them, wealthy, powerful, and learned, the admiration of their fellow-creatures, and the lights of the whole universe. Look upon them, and remember, that not one of all these did Christ Our Lord invite to the most beautiful and entrancing sight, which this world has ever seen. He did not call the powerful Romans, nor the kings, nor yet the wise men of this world—but the poor, the humble, the despised and rejected of men. Hence we should learn how Christ loved poverty, humility, and suffering to the last; and that we must likewise aim at the same spirit, if we are in any way to be benefited by this sublime and joyful mystery. The path of humiliations and a lifelong endurance is that which leads to heaven, and if to-day we may well stand straining our eyes towards heaven, let us not forget that the Mount of Olives, which beheld the glory of Christ in His ascension, was also the ground which the blood of His sufferings bedewed and watered. In the words of St. Paul, “If we are dead, and our life is hidden with Christ in God, when Christ

shall appear, Who is our life,—then shall we also appear with Him in glory.”*

Secondly, there is another lesson to be learnt from the circumstances of Christ's ascension. Our Lord appeared for the last time, upon the Mount of Olives: for, as it is written in the Acts of the Apostles, when a cloud had taken Him out of their sight “they returned back into Jerusalem from the mount, which is called Olivet.”† Plainly, therefore, Christ wished us to understand how, in the very midst of the joyful feeling which naturally fills us, as we turn hopefully towards the contemplation of heaven and its rewards, we must never take our hearts away from the troubles and sufferings of life. He might well have chosen many other places, in and about Jerusalem, for the manifestation of His glory: but in His eyes, none so meet, none so congruous, as the spot where the whole aggregate of His sufferings had seemed collected together in all their intensity.—So let us feel. The time will come for all good Christians, to ascend with Christ to heaven. But assuredly it is by suffering that such will come to pass, by a life of self-denial and mortification that we shall effectually imitate Christ, and by participating resignedly, and with perfect sub-

* Coloss. iii. 3, 4.

† Acts, i. 12.

mission to the Divine Will, in the concentration of suffering that heaped itself upon Him in the Garden of Olives, that we also shall one day rise gloriously from out of the midst of those sufferings, and ascend triumphantly with Him into heaven.

Let us, therefore, unite joyfully in congratulation with Christ, let us thank Him—because, as the Church sings, “He has been raised up into heaven, that He might cause us to become participators of His divinity.” In the mean time, “throwing off all impiety and worldly desires, let us live soberly, justly and holily in this world, expecting the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God, and of Our Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

Our Blessed Lady is not stated in Holy Scripture, as having been present at Christ's ascension; but as good Catholics, and servants of Mary, we may devoutly believe that she was. Many things have credibly happened in her regard, which are not recorded in Holy Writ. But the Saints have always believed them: for instance, that Mary received in private the first visit of Our Lord after His Resurrection. In like manner, was she surely witness of His Ascension. Contemplating the circumstances of this great mystery, therefore, and

* Tit. ii. 12.

in all the pictures which we make to our imagination of those events, as they occurred, Our Lady must not be omitted. She walked then with Christ and His disciples from Jerusalem, she spoke to Him, and received His blessed converse in return. Nor was she absent to the end: for standing on the Mount of Olives, of a certainty she received the last good word, and the last embrace, the tender privilege of a mother. But mark the sequel. Having returned to Jerusalem, it is related that the apostles "were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and with Mary the Mother of Jesus."* Here is our lesson. "O Blessed Virgin Mary, teach it to us with such purpose, that having assisted with thee at the Ascension of Our Lord into heaven, we may know, on resuming the course of our daily actions, how, by what means, and in whose company, we are to merit ourselves so glorious a reward hereafter."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

At a distance of about fifteen miles from Rome, there is a beautiful little town called Genazzano. It lays claim to a very high antiquity, and the reader of history in the middle ages will remember its name, as

Acts, i. 14.

associated with some of the most striking events of that period. The town is now remarkable for extreme beauty of position, and also because the site of a rich chapel, known as the "Madonna di Buon Consiglio," or "Our Lady of Good Counsel," one of the most famous shrines in Central Italy. None but those who have been in Italy, can form an adequate idea of the lovely situation of Genazzano. Seated upon the decline of those hills which flow off like a curling wave from the Sabine mountains, it lies shrouded in a nest of beautiful trees and gardens. Add to this, the clear and smiling sky of Italy, and we can imagine in some way the sweet Sanctuary that Mary has erected in that charming spot. Of ancient origin as a place of devotion, it is, nevertheless, within the last few centuries only that Genazzano has become so special an object of pilgrimage. The attachment of the surrounding populations, and even of others far and wide, to this holy place is well known, and the feasts of Our Lady, together with the month of Mary, are particular attractions at Genazzano. Let us then join our suffrages to those pious Catholics during this month, and if we cannot in body, let us at least in spirit spend a few moments praying at so favoured a Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin.

PRAYER OF BLESSED RAYMOND JOURDAIN,
ABBOT OF CELLES.

Draw me after thee, O Virgin Mary, that I may run in' the odour of thine ointments. Do thou draw me: for I am held back by the weight of my sins, and by the malice of mine enemies. As no one goes to thy Son unless the heavenly Father draweth him, so in a certain manner do I presume to say, than no one goes to Him unless thou dost draw him by thy holy prayers. It is thou, who teachest true wisdom. It is thou, who obtainest grace for sinners, being our advocate. It is thou, who dost promise glory to him who honours thee; for thou art the treasureholder of graces. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Twenty-seventh Day.

ON THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

MEDITATION.

IN the holy Gospel, and in the Acts of the Apostles, it is written that Our Blessed Lord, having accomplished His mission on earth, led out His disciples to the Mount of Olives, and having looked upon them once more with the tenderest love, that He

spread out His arms and imparted to them His divine blessing. And immediately we behold Him lifted up from the earth, surrounded with ineffable glory and majesty, and borne upwards by the innate force of His own power as God, until He disappears from the sight of His wondering followers. Here ends our earthly knowledge of Christ : but our faith travels further. "And the Lord Jesus.....was taken up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God."* To heaven must our thoughts be directed : for when a cloud has taken Him from out of the sight of His disciples, the gates of heaven are thrown open to Him, legions of angelic spirits come forth to meet Him, and falling down they adore Him, whilst the Eternal Father places Him upon a throne of transcendent glory and happiness. And as Christ Himself said, He went "to prepare a dwelling for us"† We must consider heaven, therefore, as the resting-place of the just, the sweet untroubled mansion of blessedness and peace, which Christ has provided for us above, if we follow Him faithfully here below. What, in short, the reward is, which we may look forward to in the next world : such is the subject we have to meditate upon to-day. And, without much working of the imagination, we may

* St. Mark, xvi. 19.

† St. John, xiv. 2, 3.

easily assure ourselves upon all that the Sacred Scriptures, the holy Fathers and doctors, teach us upon these points.

Heaven is a place of perfect joy, and this joy bears various marks or qualities, as follows :—

The joy of heaven is, in the first place, quite pure and unalloyed. On earth, there are certainly many things that rejoice the heart of man ; but none of these offer a pure joy, being always mingled with some kind of suffering. How many people imagine that the height of joy consists in being rich and well off in the world, or at least in having a competency which may dispense a man from labouring, and so forth. But they are deceived : for a kingdom even does not create happiness, as experience teaches ; nor yet honours, nor high position, nor every worldly advantage. It may be some pleasure to be praised, and to find one's-self exalted before others : but all this carries some trouble and pain along with it. Nothing in life is without some suffering. Are we in good health ? we may at the same time be poor. Are we rich ? we may nevertheless be crossed with infirmities and sickness. Are we both well and rich ? how often do not other many trials await us. The worldling, that hurries about from one pleasure to another, not unfrequently is taken

with some infirmity which robs him of his enjoyment and poisons that pleasure. Besides, every unlawful indulgence, pleasurable though it be for the moment, bears with it a sting and remorse of conscience. Even the practice of virtue, which is creative of the highest and most perfect happiness on earth, is not wholly unaccompanied by sufferings. There are struggles to encounter, insults to endure, and often great weariness and desolation of heart. In this world, therefore, a joy pure and unclouded is not to be found. As the earth becomes moistened with water, as the bright sky grows murky, as the metal receives its alloy—so our joys and pleasures are all mixed with discomfort. But in the kingdom of heaven, how different! There—is nothing, which in the smallest degree can disturb or afflict us. All persecution, all sorrow, every pain and grief, every evil has come to an end. Nothing can effect, even for a moment, the happy state and blessedness of heaven. In the words of St. John the Evangelist:—"God will wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor wailing, nor shall sorrow be any more, for the former things are passed away."* There is it, that those, who have been meek and humble here, shall possess the land.

* Apocal. xxi. 4.

There shall those be filled, who have hungered and thirsted on earth. There shall the merciful find mercy, and the clean of heart see God, and the poor possess the kingdom of heaven. Its joys are consequently of the purest, without any mixture of pain, and compared to which the greatest joys of earth bear not the slightest comparison.

But heaven is something far greater : for not only is all sorrow and pain entirely and ever absent from that blessed abode, but there reigns also the highest and most complete joy and happiness. To convey some faint idea of this truth to our minds, behold, on the one hand, a little grain of sand, so small that ten thousand such could be held in the hand ; and look up again to the highest mountain in the world, for example, the mountain of Chimborasso in South America. How great the difference between these two objects ! But listen :—were we to take all the joys and pleasures together, which men have ever enjoyed since the beginning of the world till now, and compare them with the joys of the elect in heaven, the difference would not be less but greater. The joys of heaven cannot be understood on earth. “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath it entered

into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those who love Him."* How great, we may learn from this, how great and boundless must be the happiness of that kingdom when they cannot be comprehended by any mortal, not even by the Apostle of the Gentiles, who himself had been wrapped up into the third heaven. So much however do we know, that it far surpasses any happiness that this world has ever heard of or conceived. Moses looked upon the face of God on Mount Sinai, and forty days swept past him like so many seconds; and when he descended from the mountain, bright rays of light beamed forth from his brow. St. Peter looked upon his glorified Saviour on Mount Thabor, and was beside himself with joy. Oh, what joy must it be to behold the face of God in heaven! This much can we say, that the joy which is the portion of the least of the angels in heaven, is a million times greater than all the pleasures of this world together.

Still there is one more quality, which is in truth that which makes heaven really heaven. Heaven is eternal. Here all things finish; money, power, influence, good health, and youth, every the greatest pleasure in life. They may last many

* 1 Cor. ii 9.

years; but, in the end, they end also. What great men has the world seen, what kings and conquerors, what rich men and powerful—and even in our own remembrance, how many! But what has come of all these children of Adam? Where are they? Who thinks of them? Who now minds them? This life is indeed a shadow, “a vapour,” as St. James calls it, “which a little while is visible, and then shall vanish away.”* But how thrice blessed are the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem! Their joy and happiness endure for ever. The saints of the Old Law, for instance, entered heaven with Our Blessed Lord on the day of His Ascension. Since then, many hundred years have elapsed: but in all that long time, their blessedness has been never interrupted for one single second, much less ceased. And when another eighteen hundred years have gone by, the termination of their heaven will be just as far off as if they had but just entered there. Thousands and millions of years will flow onwards in the sea of eternity, but their happiness will endure for ever, for ever, and for ever—without cessation, without the most trifling interruption, without being in the smallest disturbed or even clouded. “The just,” saith the Holy Spirit,

* St. James, iv. 15.

“shall live for ever; with the Lord is their reward, and their shelter with the Almighty.”* . Oh, what a joy inconceivable will be infused into the hearts of those who, after a stormy unrelenting life on earth, shall find themselves in heaven, when the thought strikes upon their minds that their happiness is to last for ever and for ever. To reign there everlastingly, to behold the face of God for all eternity, to dwell for endless ages in the company of the angels and saints, never to see the end of the bliss of heaven: who can take in so great a happiness? Yet such has God prepared for us in heaven.

And with this belief earnestly impressed on our minds, can we wonder, with the same thought fixed in theirs, how the martyrs could have gone fearlessly to death—how so many holy confessors could have walked courageously through life, in the midst of such persecutions and troubles—how thousands of Christians, despising everything in the world, should have cried out with St. Ignatius, “how contemptible is this earth when we contemplate heaven?” Beautiful and inspiring, indeed, are the words of St. Gregory the Great upon this point—“If we consider, dear brethren,” exclaims that glorious saint, “what and

* Wisdom, v 16.

how great things are promised to us in heaven, everything on earth becomes vile to our minds ; for the substance of earthly objects, compared to the happiness of heaven, is . . . death rather than life. The very corruption of our body, which passeth daily away, what else is it but one continuous death? But what tongue can tell, or what mind is able to understand, the magnitude of the joys of the city above? To be present with the choirs of angels, to assist with the blessed spirits in all the glory of our Creator, to gaze upon the face of God, to behold around us an interminable light, never to be disturbed with the fear of death, and never more to see corruption !”*

Oh, let us strive hard for heaven, and, when faint-hearted and weak, call on the sweet help and patronage of Our Blessed Lady. Mary loves her Son, with a love that no other creature is capable of giving Him : but her's is no selfish love. It is one that continually urges her to impart Him to others, to let others enjoy Him, possess Him, and be happy in and with Him. It is a love like His own love, which embraces all men. We may be sinners, and great sinners : we may have a natural feeling, that we are not worthy to aspire to so great and intimate a union with Christ Our Lord :

* St. Gregory, Hom. in Evang.

and such a feeling is not without its good points and merits, for it shows an humble soul, and attracts the love of God. But let us not despond. With Mary our Mother to help us, there is nothing really to fear. In the same manner as Christ loves us and draws us to Him, so will Mary (if only we cultivate a disposition to good, and raise our hearts heavenward) leave no stone unturned, until she bring us within those realms of heavenly joy. "Mary Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, never cease then to pray for us and to assist us, till that moment when thou hast safely lodged us, by thine intercession, within the eternal gates of heaven."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

THE parish of Nôtre Dame des Victoires, situated in the centre of Paris, was once the hotbed of crime and sin, a hornet's nest of vice. But about the year 1836, the parish priest conceived the idea of establishing in his church a particular devotion of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and of placing his entire parish more especially under her protection. Every one knows the wonders, that have been the consequence of such childlike piety; how that parish, from being the sink itself of iniquity, has become a model to others, and how there have gone

forth from thence blessings without number, and graces abundant in conversions to God. What a marvellous power is that of Mary with sinners! The church of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, has been since then one of the best frequented pilgrimages to Mary, so that no Catholic now thinks of visiting Paris without paying his devotions to so favoured a Sanctuary. Let us enter the portals of that Church, and, mingling with the throng of devout worshippers of Mary, let us join our prayers to theirs, that in her bounty, the Mother of God may deal out to us some at least of the favours she obtained for them.

PRAYER OF ST. METHODIUS.

Thy name, O Mother of God, is filled with all graces and divine blessings. Thou hast contained Him Who cannot be contained, and nourished Him Who nourisheth all creatures. Be glad then with exceeding joy: for He is thy debtor, Who giveth life to all creatures. We are all God's debtors: but He is a debtor to thee. Hence is it, O most holy Mother of God, that thou dost possess more goodness and greater charity than all the other saints, and hast freer access to God than any of them: for thou art His Mother. Deign then, we pray thee, to remember us in our miseries, who celebrate

thy glories, and who know how great is thy goodness. Amen.

Twenty-eighth Day.

ON CERTAIN OTHER OF THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

MEDITATION.

YESTERDAY we considered the joys of heaven; and although no mortal man is able to tell us in its fulness what reward Almighty God has prepared for the just, still this much are we sure of, that any words, however strong they may sound, are not too great in expressing the infinite happiness which awaits us above. As on the one hand no straining of the mind, or no pictures of the imagination, can adequately convey to us any real idea of hell, as nothing we can say or feel is forcible or true enough in depicting, as they exist, the torments of that dreadful prison—so, on the other hand, is it quite impossible to describe by any form of language, or even rightly to feel, the real nature and extent of the everlasting joys of heaven. Almighty God has undoubtedly given us some knowledge of heaven, through Holy Church: but for His own wise purpose, it is only to a certain

point. Even that much, however, we are enabled to enlarge upon, and to cull fruit from out of it, to our soul's salvation—so great a subject is the happiness of the life to come.

Our catechism teaches, that in the soul of man there are three powers, the will, the memory, and the understanding. And the just will be infinitely rewarded and blessed, in all these three powers in heaven.

The moment a soul is admitted into heaven, it receives a most perfect knowledge of the mysteries of God, and of all created things. In our time, we but “know in part,”* as St. Paul declares; so that the cleverest, and most learned, or even the most holy man, can never attain, while on earth, but to an imperfect knowledge of God. Here we can see only “through a glass:”† but take away the corruption of this world, and we shall see “face to face,” being endued with the highest degree of perfection. All languages will be the same to us, all sciences and arts will unfold themselves, our minds will be opened to understand fully the mysteries of our holy religion; and the wonderful manner in which God has ordered the universe, with the whole secret of His divine dispensations, so incomprehensible here below, will stand out clear

* 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

† Ibidem, 12.

and plain before us. The simple-minded Christian and the artless child will then be greater in wisdom and knowledge, than all the learned men together that have ever existed. Oh, how boundless must be the joy which that moment brings upon the soul that is saved!

But nothing less is the happiness awarded to the soul in heaven, through the power of memory. That faculty of ours, extraordinary and godlike as it is, by which we are enabled to retravel whole fields of our life, to repass often in one second, series of events and particular circumstances that have happened to us—that faculty is yet incomplete, and not unfrequently impaired on earth: but in heaven, it will burst out with all the glory and power of a resurrection to life—there, its full perfection will bloom forth—accurate in detail, complete in measure. Consider, if we are saved—which God grant us—with what delight shall we then look back upon this world and its troubles. If it is pleasurable to reflect upon a good action performed, to think upon something that we have done for the glory of God, even here below, oh, who can say what shall be the pleasures of memory hereafter? How shall we not remember with blessings the sufferings and pain we endured, the penance we went through, the pious

works we engaged in, the graces we made use of? And how trifling and small will all our sorrows appear, how easy the way to heaven, and how light the burdens which God placed upon us to bear? Shall we not wonder, too, that we could ever have been stupid enough to have doubted about the choice of a virtuous or wicked life? And having saved ourselves, what joy and exultation shall we not indulge in, that we had courage and grace to leave our evil ways, and following Christ, to have entered and kept the road which led us to heaven? "We might have been lost," shall we exclaim, with a transport of joy, "we might have been lost a thousand times—we might have been condemned to the flames of hell, and now we are saved, everlastingly saved! We have attained to that end, which was the object and aim of our existence. O happy penance! O blessed fasts! O blessed alms! O thrice blessed all, whatsoever we have suffered and done, for eternal life! O Jesus! sole object of our love and desires, do we indeed thank Thee for all Thou hast done for us, and for the gift of everlasting happiness!" How passing sweet will be those remembrances!

On earth, we can never be perfectly at ease and content: our hearts contain a void, which all this world can never entirely fill.

Ask the rich man, who possesses wealth in abundance—ask the worldling, who hurries about from one pleasure to another—ask the learned, whose heads are full of worldly lore—ask of those, whom the world itself prizes and deems happy—ask all these, and not one can say that he is content and happy. Their desires are ever pushing them forward: they have never had enough, and always wish for more. But far otherwise is the lot of heaven: in that celestial habitation—in that calm and tranquil abode, every desire, every act of the will however longing, is no sooner felt, than completely satisfied and blessed. In that peaceful resting-place we may wish indeed, and our wills may work indeed; but, in return, “we shall be filled to overflow with the abundance of God’s house, and we shall be given to drink from the torrent of His delights, for with Him is the fountain of life.” These are the words of the thirty-fifth Psalm, and thus, in prophetic language, does the Royal Prophet announce the joys of heaven.

Here we have some perception of the manner in which Almighty God intends to bless us, through the three great faculties of the soul. But there are numberless other sources of joy in heaven, too many to point out even, far less to dwell upon. Some, however, we may briefly recur to. As

God will deal with every one according to his works, there will be the particular rewards for particular virtues—the virgins shall follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, as St. John has said in the Apocalypse—those that instruct others to justice, shall shine like stars to all eternity—the meek shall possess the land—the apostles shall sit upon the brightest thrones—the holy martyrs and confessors, who have confessed Christ before men, shall be perpetually confessed by Him before His heavenly Father—those that have hungered and thirsted shall be filled—the mourners comforted, and the clean of heart obtain a special vision of God--the poor shall become rich, and those that have been humble shall be exalted. These, and other thoughts we might follow up, will serve to remind us how Almighty God, in rewarding the elect in heaven, although in truth “all to all,” will yet be “all” to each one in particular besides; and how, mindful of the individual merits of each, He will bless them accordingly, and with surpassing love and tenderness.

One further thought let us take, to impress the idea of heaven more lastingly upon our hearts. Every moment passed in that region of bliss, will be one of intense delight and pleasure: but if there be one,

which, above the rest, may seem to claim precedence, as well in happiness as in time, of a surety it is the moment of entrance into heaven. This life, in its best looks, compared to life eternal, is as evil beside good, as misery compared to perfect happiness. And with this reflection well implanted in us, let us imagine that we stand by the deathbed of a good youth of twenty. He may be poor, or he may be rich—most probably the former. One thing surely—he has had a hard time of it, young as he is. His crosses have rained down plentifully, and the world has used him roughly. But he has borne it well, and the good fight is foughten. This holy youth dies, and his chastened spirit has passed unscathed by the great ordeal of God's judgment. The eternal gates have opened to him—and what a sight discloses itself! Who can describe it?—who is able to recount it? His eyes, just cleansed from the corruption of earth, have opened to the glorious light of heaven: all around is blessedness and peace, and in the long far distance—we may so fancy it—rises up the dazzling splendour of the throne of God. Simple, loving, and angel-like, he rushes forward to the embrace of his heavenly Father. But who are these that meet him as he goes? There is first his angel guardian,

who watched and tended him so faithfully from childhood. Where is he, that cannot fancy the thrilling embrace which must clasp them? Then his relations and friends—perhaps his own father and mother, his brothers and sisters, who have prayed him into heaven; or many whom, perhaps, his own fervent prayers have been the means of delivering from purgatory. And his patron saints are there, those whom he loved on earth, whom he so often prayed to, who helped him in return with their prayers, and who now receive him joyfully to conduct him to the realms of eternal bliss. What thanks on the one hand, what glad words on the other, must now pass between them: what love and joy inflame the souls of all! And lastly, who is she that approaches in great brightness and glory, more brilliant than all the rest, with a crown of twelve stars encircling her brow? She comes quickly, and with a beaming countenance, and the whole heavenly host seem to make way as she proceeds. It is Mary, the Mother of God, the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of men, the Mother also of this good youth. What a meeting, must that be! He had loved Our Blessed Lady, he had adopted her as his mother, he had engendered within him the tenderest devotion to Mary, he had placed in her his hopes

of salvation after God, sought her aid in every difficulty, prayed to her, praised her, preached about her, and honoured her; and in return Mary had helped him, procured pardon for him, grace for him, and finally saved him. And now they behold each other face to face, the Mother and the son, Mary and her child. Oh, if a man's tenderest love is his mother's, if the hardest heart has a soft point when his mother's name is mentioned, can we not in some way picture to our minds the entrancing rapture of the embrace which unites them, not to part again, not a sinning worldling and a mortal woman, but a new-born member of the blessed choirs, and the Virgin Queen of heaven. To Mary is given the power and privilege to place this holy youth in the possession of his eternal reward, and joyfully she leads him forward to the kingdom which was prepared for the elect of God from the beginning of the world, and to a perfect union with Him in life everlasting.

Thus, having remembered the good guardianship of our angels and patron saints, let us turn to Mary. We thank God, indeed, with all our heart, that He has given us so firm a confidence in the merits of Christ, and in the powerful intercession of Mary. But let us redouble our faith, let us push this conviction still deeper into our

souls. "Blessed the moment when we shall meet thee in heaven, O Blessed Virgin Mary! We hope in thee. Oh, beseech thy Son Jesus, by the merits of His passion, to preserve and evermore to increase this confidence in us, that thus we may be saved."

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Waldrast is a famous place of pilgrimage in the Tyrol. As a Sanctuary, it was founded in the year 1409, to receive the miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin and Our Blessed Lord, which had been discovered growing naturally in a larch tree. This image now stands over the high altar of the church. For near four hundred years, Waldrast was the continual resort of pilgrims and the pious servants of Mary, until the year 1783, when the fine old church was destroyed by the Emperor Joseph, the monastery thrown down, the sacred image indecorously removed to a neighbouring chapel, and the accumulated offerings of centuries, to the amount of 100,000 florins, taken away. Within the last few years the church has been rebuilt, and the monastery partly restored, for the accommodation of the Servite monks, who are sent there from their house at Innsbruck, and are always ready to receive the confes-

sions of the faithful. The cures and miracles performed at this Sanctuary are so well authenticated and numerous, that the good religious, for several centuries, habitually recorded them in large books kept for the purpose. Some of these still exist at Waldrast, and the number of miracles entered amount to no less than 2,970. The prodigies still continue, and the faith and devotion of the good people of that truly Catholic country to their ancient Sanctuary is now as strong as ever. Let us imitate them in our poor way, and let us go in spirit to make a hearty prayer to Our Lady of Waldrast.

PRAYER OF THE ABBOT BLOSIUS.

Hail, most benign Mother of Mercy !
Hail, thou who art our Comforter, Mary,
the desire of our hearts ! Who is there
that loves thee not ? Thou art our light in
doubt , our solace in grief, our help in diffi-
culty, our refuge in dangers and temptations.
Thou, after thine only-begotten Son, art our
certain salvation. Blessed are those that
love thee, O Lady ! incline, I beseech thee,
the ears of thy compassion to the prayers
of a miserable sinner, thy servant, and dis-
pel thou the darkness of my sins by the
rays of thy holiness, that so I may become
pleasing unto thee. Through Christ Our
Lord. Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Day.

ON THE WORK OF PERSEVERANCE.

MEDITATION.

As long as earth holds us, so long must we labour and toil at the sweat of our brow. Hence, however profitable, however useful our considerations, we cannot always meditate, nor can we yet retain these pious thoughts and reflections ever in our minds. The devil, notwithstanding, is going about "seeking whom he may devour:"* and as we are therefore continuously tempted—as the laws of God are not mere pious sentiments, but enduring obligations, and as we are not commanded to do impossible things, such as a never-ending meditation would be to most people—it follows, that there must be some means at hand, by which we are enabled to keep good the fruit already gained—in other words, by which the great work of perseverance is to find its place amongst us. Our Lord has said, that only "he that shall persevere to the end, shall be saved."† From which we learn that, however much we may have been touched by the important truths, which have been

* 1 St. Peter, v. 8.

† St. Matt. xxiv. 13.

brought forward in the foregoing meditations, all is so much waste paper, so much time thrown away, unless we set to work in downright earnest to serve God and save our souls. By God's grace, we have at least made a beginning: let us now see, in a short manner, what we are to do in order to finish that which we have commenced.

The two great means, by the fervent use of which we may obtain the grace of perseverance, are watchfulness and prayer.

First, as to watchfulness: Christ told His disciples, and through them He told us also, "*to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.*"* And what does a man do, who finds himself wandering in the middle of a dark night, through a wood full of every kind of danger, infested by robbers and the haunt of wild beasts? Is he not careful about every step he takes, fearful lest he should fall into some snare—lest he should be precipitated down some declivity? Does he not hearken anxiously to every blast? Does he not watch every movement of the trees? Does not every little bird,—every falling leaf, alarm him? He dare hardly trust himself, but is ever on the watch, guarding himself carefully against all dangers in his own person, and from others. And this is a picture of our jour-

* St. Matt. xxvi. 41.

ney through the desert of life: for on whichever side we look, dangers are imminent, which may rob us every moment of the costly treasure of our souls—the grace of God. Hence, to persevere in virtue, we must continually *watch*. And what are we to watch? Everything, in, and about us. Our nature is so corrupt, that without ceasing we are tried with temptations. We have eyes and ears, through which, unless we watch them with care, sin without end is poured into our hearts. We have tongues, which are ever being tempted to uncharitable and otherwise unlawful discourse. And our heart itself, how many times, daily and hourly, do not bad and wicked thoughts rise up there, which, if not at once repressed, may carry us onwards to perdition. Oh, what hosts of people have lost themselves in the greatest crimes, because of their want of watchfulness! David did not keep a restraint on his eyes, and became a murderer and an adulterer. Samson gave ear to the wiles of Delila; and he lost his strength, and was delivered to his enemies. Judas did not curb the first avaricious thought, and, from one sin to another, he at last betrayed his divine Master. And all we that have sinned, no matter what our sins, let us reflect a moment and consider the first cause of our sin: perhaps, it was an impru-

dent look at some person or thing: perhaps an evil discourse listened to, first with curiosity, then with pleasure; perhaps, an incautious word, or an ill-timed gesture. Or, perchance again, an inward temptation which arose chanceways in our minds, and which we were neglectful of repulsing as we ought. Like a spark upon inflammable materials, it excited the smouldering embers of sin within us, and soon a flame, which burned but to expel the grace of God from our hearts. Oh, where is he amongst us, whose conscience could not tell this tale? Therefore stern watchfulness over everything, but especially over our five senses, which are the channels of sin to us; watchfulness over our thoughts, and concerning whatever may possibly befall us from the world. This is a necessary antidote to the poison we breathe—a safeguard against the dangers that surround us. To maintain one's-self in the grace of God, and to persevere in the good resolutions made, the following are some of the means the saints used in the same circumstances:—

1. In the morning to look forward into the day, to remember what employment, what engagements we have, where we are going to, and whom we are likely to meet, so that no person or thing shall, if possible, take us unprepared against temptation.
2. Dur-

ing the course and labour of the day, to renew the morning resolution. 3. Watchfulness in all things, with especial attention to that which is going on in the mind, so as never to permit that it should dwell for an instant upon that, which might afterwards cause our downfall and ruin. This is the way to keep up an effective watchfulness, in respect of the devil and his works. Therefore watchfulness is one great means, towards the carrying out of the work of perseverance: but it would be foolish to pretend that it is the only means. Christ has told us to watch, adding, however, the injunction to *pray* also: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Let us understand something of this means, which we are to join to that of watchfulness.

Watchfulness is useful in discovering and warding off the danger, which threatens: prayer furnishes the strength to encounter and overcome it, when present. Not a few are lost, through an overweening confidence in themselves, thinking they are strong enough to resist every temptation, and to serve God faithfully; but forgetting that many have fallen in a similar manner, not excepting St. Peter himself—"Yea, though I should die with Thee, I will not deny

Thee.”* Man is a frail creature: hence King David exclaims, “Unless the Lord build the house, in vain have they laboured who build it: unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does he watch who guards it.”† In like manner, St. Paul writes: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God.”‡ We must pray therefore—unceasingly pray: for God sends His Holy Spirit to enlighten, and His grace to strengthen those only who pray and ask Him for it. Prayer is the life of the spiritual soul: as long as we continue the practice of prayer, so long has the devil no power over us; and that great apostle of prayer, St. Alphonsus Liguori, tells us that prayer is the beginning, the end, and the middle of every single thing in the interior life. When Moses held up his arms in prayer, the Israelites were conquerors: but when tired and bent down with fatigue, their enemies won the field. And at what time was it, that any of us fell into sin? Was it perchance when we were careful and diligent in our morning and evening prayer, when we came to church regularly, and lifted up our hearts to God oftentimes during the day? No. Under such circumstances, we were virtuous

* St. Matt. xxvi. 35.

† Ps. cxxvi.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5

and holy: but when no more we recommended ourselves to God, when we began to leave off daily prayer, to be absent from church, and to neglect the frequent offering up of our hearts, oh, that was the time we lapsed into the power of the devil and sinned.

We must pray therefore: for prayer alone can save us. Let us not walk in the footsteps of those, who, notwithstanding the blessings which Almighty God is showering upon them during the whole space of the twenty-four hours, be they sinners even, yet never think of giving Him as much as three minutes in the morning, who tumble out of bed like dogs, who pass the entire day without a thought of God, who lay down to rest at night as if no God existed, and whose minds are so little used to prayer, that the very common forms of prayer have dislodged themselves from their fallow memories. Let us not imitate these: for such are not Christians, but brutish animals, who forget, or know not the God that made and keeps them.

What rule, then, shall we follow in praying? Pray we must: for Christ says "pray always." But all cannot obey this literally. Such is the portion of those alone, whose vocation calls them to choose "the better part:"—yet all can in spirit. We should say then carefully

our morning and evening prayers, both, but especially in the morning, for God loves the first fruits : and they need not be long—a few minutes perhaps ; only let them be said before everything else, and not irreverently at our work or dressing, but on our knees. What a beautiful thing is a morning prayer, and how God blesses it, how He listens to it, and grants it ! And are we not certain to obtain thus the blessing and protection of God throughout the day, in all our undertakings and labours ? Experience shows, that a man who practises morning prayer, is pretty sure to live well up to his other duties ; whereas the moment this is discontinued, sin creeps in, and draws his heart from God. And naturally : for without the grace of God we can do nothing, and God never grants His grace unless first we ask Him. So likewise with our evening prayers : we should never go to bed without thanking Him for all His benefits, and commending ourselves to His good providence. Again, during our daily employments, our hearts should be often lifted up to God, awakening good thoughts, chasing away bad ones, and begging for grace. As the birds have their nests into which they can retire when necessary, as wild animals have their woods and forests, where to hide and find shelter from the pursuit of the

hunter, or to protect themselves from the scorching heat of the sun, so should a Christian select every day some resort or refuge, such as the thought of Our Lord's sufferings, or other pious considerations whereinto to withdraw himself, and to seek grace and support amid the anxious warfare of life. We should often call upon God with the Apostle, "Lord, save us, we perish"*—"Jesus, Mary, Joseph, help us that we may not sin"—or "Jesus, rather let me die than sin"—and the like. This is the way to "pray always," and effectively, too: for prayer is no impossibility,—it is not a thing for monks and nuns alone, but for all. And it can be done, if only we take good courage, and are in earnest about it. One thing is certain, that every one that intends to get to heaven *must* pray. There is no other road there. But let us not be faint-hearted: for another thing is also certain, namely, that thousands of good Christians, even in the lowest state of life, have thus sanctified themselves, and are now in heaven. If they have done so, why cannot we?

And to-day, let us especially ask the prayers of Our Lady before the throne of God, that He would vouchsafe to enlighten our understandings to see the good and the

* St. Matthew, viii. 25.

beauty of these holy maxims, and that seeing them, we may also execute them in very earnest. Who so watchful of herself, as the Holy Scriptures show, in all the perplexities of life, as Mary? Who so prayerful, so united to God in prayer, as the Mother of God? Let us ask her then fervently, to lend us her potent help in the important work we are going to carry out, of perseverance in our good resolutions.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

A little to the left of the royal road from Naples to Sant' Anastasia, and about a mile before arriving at that populous town, there lies a Sanctuary of Mary known by the name of "La Madonna del Arco," or "Our Lady of the Arch." It had existed as an oratory dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, for a long period previous to the beginning of the sixteenth century: but it was not until then, that any idea seems to have been entertained of erecting a Sanctuary on a larger scale. Several well authenticated miracles appear to have given rise to its reputation, which soon increased, until it became a favourite pilgrimage for the whole of Southern Italy. The miracles have continued hardly without

interruption to the present day, and the Holy See has heaped grace upon grace in the spiritual order upon this Sanctuary sacred to Mary. The accounts of the present state of the pilgrimage are so cheering and consoling, as to outstrip the devotion of former times. Pilgrims flock in daily from all parts of the kingdom of Naples, and upon the walls of the Sanctuary Church are visible hundreds upon hundreds of votive offerings in every possible form and kind. The greatest concourse is always on Easter Monday and Whit-Monday, chiefly because on those days a great number of the miracles aforementioned occurred. The king and the royal family have the greatest devotion to this holy place, and some few years back his majesty made a pilgrimage thither with other pious persons. The month of Mary is kept with the liveliest piety. Let us join ourselves in spirit for a few moments, by a genuine prayer to Mary, to the good and fervent Catholics of the south.

PRAYER OF ST. ALPHONSUS.

O Queen of heaven, I who was once a miserable slave of the devil.....how many new temptations have I yet to conquer! O most sweet Lady of mine, protect me, and permit me not again to become their

slave. Do thou help me at all times. I know thy good will, and that with thine assistance I shall conquer, if I recommend myself to thee.....I ask thee therefore for this grace: obtain, that amid the assaults of hell, I may always have recourse to thee, saying, "Mary, do thou succour me. My Mother, permit me not to lose my God." Amen.

Thirtieth Day.

ON THE ENDURING PRESENCE OF CHRIST WITH US IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

MEDITATION.

"BEHOLD I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world."* These are the words of Christ, and they contain the promise which He made to His Church, that He would abide with her for ever. Every Catholic believes in their entire accomplishment. Christ did not speak in vain: because, from the moment those words passed His sacred lips till now, has He ever been living with His Church, teaching her, keeping her, blessing her, and preserving her from every error and conta-

* St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

gion. And so will He continue to do, till the end of time. This therefore, is the primary interpretation of the text above quoted. But there are also many secondary interpretations. Christ is with us in various ways. He is with us in the good books we read, in the holy inspirations we receive, and in the pious discourses we listen to: He is amongst us, when we pray together: He is at our side in temptations. He is present in the devout pictures we look at, and in the sacred image of the crucifix, in the devotions we attend, and the services we assist at. In these, and other modes, is Christ Our Lord ever present with us. But there is one manner, in which His blessed words are still more lovingly, as more substantially, manifested, and that is, in the enduring presence which He maintains in the very midst of us, by His real presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We all believe this firmly, in the Catholic Church. Some consideration upon it, however, will not be wide of the purpose, as we bring our Month of Mary to a conclusion. Good and useful at all times, such reflections are especially so now: for what have we been engaged in? Have we not been learners in the school of Christ, have we not knelt at His blessed feet, hearkening to His divine admonitions, noting His

every action, and seeking to draw from that fountain of fountains the eternal truths of salvation? But although we have followed Him out to the Mount of Olives, and watched Him as He ascended into heaven, yet Christ is not gone from us, He has not left us orphans. "Behold," says He, "I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world:" and He is still therefore miraculously and supernaturally present with us, in the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood, to refresh us with His heavenly food, to feed and nourish our souls, to pour grace into us, and to give us to drink from the fountain of living water. Knowing this, and believing it as we do, let us by a few earnest thoughts endeavour to excite ourselves to a greater liveliness of faith, than hitherto, in regard of this most blessed mystery.

First, what great reverence should we not show Our Blessed Lord in the Holy Sacrament! Moses and other of the patriarchs of the Old Testament veiled their faces and threw themselves on the ground, when only an angel appeared to them. Jacob saw the Lord in a dream merely, and full of fear he exclaimed, "how terrible is this place! here is nothing else but the house of God and the gate of heaven."* The four-

* Gen. xxviii. 17.

and-twenty ancients in the Apocalypse, fall down before the throne of the Lamb, and the Cherubim even cover their faces, and adore God in fearing reverence. And should not a holy trembling take possession of us also, when we near the tabernacle of the altar? Should we not prostrate ourselves in the deepest humility, and confessing our own nothingness, worship the Name to which all must bend the knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth? How then have we performed this duty theretofore? Has our mind been recollected, on entering the church? Have we behaved as we ought, inwardly and outwardly, when in presence of the Blessed Sacrament? These are practical questions for us. How great these truths, how necessary their observance: but few are they who attend to them. Many are those, who, Catholic in name—are yet so in nothing else: and in what manner do they behave in church, often during the Holy Sacrifice, often during Benediction of the Holy Sacrament, often during the giving of Holy Communion, and always, nearly, at other times? Careless, lounging, irreverent, thinking about worldly affairs, seeking for amusement and diversion rather than praying, and without a single or scarcely a thought of Jesus and His blessed

Body and Blood there present before them. Are we perchance amongst that number? or are these remarks applicable, at least in some measure, to us? If so, it is time to alter our conduct: for depend upon it, irreverence and thoughtless behaviour before Christ in His Holy Sacrament is no light sin. Our Lord is there to receive our adoration and profoundest homage, and is worthy of all, and far more than all we can show Him. Consequently, under all circumstances, we must entertain the deepest reverence for this august Sacrament—in Holy Communion, in the Holy Sacrifice, when taken to a sick bed, or reserved in the tabernacle on the altar.

Secondly, what do we suppose would be our feelings, were it announced to us that Jesus Christ had appeared once more in our neighbourhood, in the same manner as He appeared in Judæa; and that moreover He had come as our best friend, loaded with gifts and presents for us, and that He was only waiting somewhere close by to receive petitions, in order to fill our house with blessings and graces? Is there a man who would not rush out to meet Him, to welcome Him with cries of "Hosanna, Son of David,"—who would not throw himself down before Him, and laying all his troubles at His divine feet, beseech Him to cure and

to heal him? Surely none. And Jesus Christ has indeed come to us: for there, within the sacred precincts of the tabernacle, does He dwell in very truth. Once He had concealed His divinity: now, it is His blessed Will to conceal both divine and human natures. The outward form is but changed, not the reality. There is He, as certainly in the tabernacle, as before in Jerusalem, beholding us, listening to us, looking into our hearts, marking every turn and feeling in them. What He was on earth, the friend of man—that is He still to-day, in this sublime mystery. Here, of all places, are fulfilled the words, “Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”* In poverty or sickness, this is our refuge: for here Christ is waiting, to feed the hungry and to cure diseases. In doubt and in trouble, it is hither we must come, for He is the light that shineth in darkness. Weakly or tempted, in health or misfortune, Jesus is to be sought in His Sacrament. He that commanded the waves and the winds, and they were still—He Who absolved the sinner Mary—Who forgave the woman in adultery—Who heard the good thief’s prayer—will hearken to us likewise, and give us hope and pardon. Oh, how the

* St. Math. xi. 28.

Saints loved the Blessed Sacrament—how they found their refuge in it, their comfort, their support ! After the labours of the day, they would come and throw all their anxieties into the bosom of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, and return thence refreshed and strengthened for their work. Their happiest hours were before the altar of Jesus. And ours may become so likewise.

Thirdly, the Blessed Sacrament is our food. The greatest happiness in the world is a worthy Communion. One good Communion is better than all the treasures of earth together. In the Holy Communion we receive not only grace, as in the other sacraments, but the author of grace, Jesus Christ Himself. He comes into us, penetrates our souls, and dwells there, as Our Lord Himself declares, “he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him.”* In the same manner as the food of this life feeds the body, so does the Blessed Sacrament feed our souls. It nourishes and strengthens us for our spiritual work, it supports us in temptation, it inflames in us the love of God, and becomes to us the surest pledge of life eternal. How anxious ought we not to be to receive this Holy Sacrament—how frequently, under proper direction, should we

* St. John, vi. 57.

not endeavour to make our Communion—and how full of faith, how humble in sentiment, how sorrowing for sin, how resolute for the future, should we be in those Communions! And when we cannot communicate in act, we must approach in spirit—with hearts of praise, and love, and desire of closer union with Jesus. This we should do often in ourselves: but also often in regard of others, whom it is our duty to pray for, and entice to this blessed banquet.

What has been said will help to revive and imprint upon us more lastingly, that which here we owe Our Lord in this mystery. Great reverence, therefore, frequent and fruitful visits to Jesus reserved for our adoration in the tabernacle, and many good and fervent communions. And, let us make thus early a friend of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, let us contract a union with Him, let us often converse with Him, lay our hearts open before Him, and learn to seek there our consolation. If we induce this habit, Christ will be always with us, and that promise which He made to His Church generally, He will deal out to us, in one sense, individually. Go then where we list, wander whither we may to foreign and far distant countries, where the language is strange and the people uncouth, on entering a Catholic church we shall

find there our friend, the friend of our youth, the friend of maturer years, the friend of our older age; and when, at last, laid low with sickness, and the hand of death upon us, the priest shall arrive and present to us the Body and Blood of Our Lord, what comfort and happiness, what strength lent us for our final passage beyond the grave! "O Jesus, we believe with the whole powers of our mind and heart, in this the holiest of Thy mysteries, grant us grace so to keep our faith, that it may not become barren by disuse, but rise up more lively than ever, by a keener sense of Thy sacred presence, a more frequent and a worthier participation in Thy Precious Body and Blood."

And let us implore our Mother Mary to help our feeble endeavours, to attend us, while we are steadying ourselves in the royal road we have chosen. It is true we are weak, and although now, by God's Grace, in the right path, yet are we prone to stumble at every obstacle, and in danger of reeling through want of force. But God's grace is omnipotent, and, having learnt something of the moral means, we are now giving attention to the great channel, by which Christ has ordained that this grace should come to us. Lest even in this we fail, however, what so assuring as Mary's

assistance? Let us pray, then, assiduously to her, that she would vouchsafe to have our hearts in her holy keeping, that so directing and guiding them, they may never stray from Christ, but always beat round that centre of our life on earth as Christians, a lively faith—namely, in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

A very famous Sanctuary of Our Lady exists at a place called Tongre, about three miles from the town of Att, in Belgium. A miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin, which is preserved there, has been the object of a special devotion since the eleventh century. It was first founded in consequence of some remarkable prodigies, which are recounted as having occurred; and the bishops of the dioceses to which Tongre has successively belonged, and the Holy See itself, seem to have promoted the devotion in every way. Pope Urban II., who lived in the eleventh century, is said to have erected a Confraternity there. The pilgrimage, and the attachment of the people to this Sanctuary, survived the horrors of the French Revolution, and have since of course increased. A Confraternity was established in 1804, which soon spread widely, and

now counts many thousand members ; and the Supreme Pontiffs, Pius VII. and Gregory XVI., opened the treasures of the Church, in respect of indulgences, in its behalf. With reference to the actual state of the Sanctuary and pilgrimage, nothing can be more edifying and beautiful. The feast of the Purification is the great festival at Tongre, and crowds upon crowds of pious pilgrims wend their way thither, on that day, and on other feasts of the Blessed Virgin, from different parts of Belgium and France. Confessions and communions are numerous and frequent, and need we say that undeniable miracles are still common? Who can doubt but that Mary is well honoured, during the month of May, in her ancient Sanctuary of Tongre? Let us join, then, in spirit the good Catholics who are surely praying there.

PRAYER OF ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA.

O Holy Mary, my Mother, and my Advocate, to thy care and particular protection, and into the bosom of thy mercy, to-day, and every day, and at the hour of my death, I recommend my soul and body. All my hopes and consolations, all my affections and trials, my life and the end of my life, do I commend unto thee, that by thy merits, and through thy most power-

ful intercession, all my thoughts, words, and actions, may be directed according to thy will and that of thy Divine Son. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Thirty-first Day.

ON TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

MEDITATION.

THIS is the last meditation we shall make, in the beauteous Month of May; and as we conclude the devotion, which has engaged us daily during this time, let us pause a moment to recollect what it is we have been doing. We have been making every day some wholesome and earnest reflections, upon the great truths of salvation: but yet not promiscuously, as these ideas, good and holy in themselves, chose to flow fancifully through our brains—but in regular order, according to system, following a certain purpose, and with a chain of argument throughout. They have been the spiritual exercises of the great Saint Ignatius, adapted for the particular use of this devotion, and fused into that peculiar form which has served us for our considerations this month. But with an especial

intention we took care daily, also, to turn our affections more pointedly than otherwise, upon the intercessory power of Our Lady; and what with invocations for her help and assistance, visits in spirit to her Sanctuaries, and prayers taken from the saints and holy writers to Mary, we have been careful to bestow that meed of homage and love upon Our Lady, which she merits so well from us, and which this sweet season, dedicated to her, seems so aptly to suggest. And after we had brought this to a close, by meditating on the joys of heaven, we added, yesterday, some practical reflections upon the enduring presence of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, that thus we might recal to mind the greatness of a mystery, which proclaims that, although Christ is in a natural manner bodily in heaven, He is yet ever abiding with us really, and substantially, and supernaturally, in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Let us now perform this same good office in regard of Our Blessed Lady, that, having invoked her prayers so frequently this month, we may clearly understand the grounds and reasons upon which the Church acts, in proposing so ardently to us, a true devotion and love for Mary. If, likewise, we learn how to honour her, and in doing so confirm our faith in her patronage, we shall have made

as loving an offering as we could make to Our Lady, on this the closing day of her Month of May.

Anything may be considered good, that does not injure either God or man ; and if we can add to this, that it glorifies God and benefits man besides, we may be sure there is no evil element included within it. Now, a true devotion to Our Blessed Lady possesses these qualities in the highest degree. Therefore it is good. It does not injure God, because the more we honour Mary, as the most perfect of His creatures, the greater honour we give to God Himself, Who made her, and without Whom she is absolutely nothing. A man would be deemed insane, and rightly so, who should refuse to praise the good works of his neighbour, on the ground that such praise detracted from the honour due to the individual himself. The very reverse is indeed the common and natural feeling of mankind, to identify, namely, the actions and works of a person with that person himself, so that they become one and the same. In like manner, Almighty God holds Our Blessed Lady in charge. She is His handiwork, and the most perfect and beautiful of His works. To offer praise to Mary, therefore, is to glorify God Himself ; and to rob her of her just rights in regard of this, is simply

robbing God Himself. Besides, who will dare to say that we must not honour Mary, when God Himself honours her? In the Catholic Church, do we not believe that Mary is the Mother of God—that she was conceived without sin—that by a miracle she became a Virgin Mother, and a Virgin she ever remained—that she was assumed into heaven by a special privilege from God—that she is now the Queen of Heaven, raised up far above Saints and Angels, and next to the very throne of God? Consequently God has honoured her in a manner, that He has honoured no other being: and, therefore, following the divine example, not only is it lawful to pay homage to Mary, but our homage is never too great, or even extravagant, as long as it falls short of the supreme honour due to Almighty God Himself. Then again, devotion to Our Lady is good in itself, because it is strictly scriptural. It was Christ Who gave her to us, as our Mother and advocate: for when dying on the cross, He turned to the disciple whom He loved, and commended him to His Mother—"Woman, behold thy son:" and so also to St. John—"Son," He said, "behold thy Mother."* And from the beginning the Church has always taught, and the Saints and Fathers have always

* St. John, xix. 26, 27.

preached, that in the person of St. John was comprised the whole body of the faithful, and that in him Our Blessed Lady received us all as her children. Besides, whatever may be speculatively said to the contrary, in practice it is quite certain that no one can be really devout to Jesus, without being likewise devout to Mary: and, on the other hand, no one can blaspheme the Blessed Virgin, without step by step being led also to blaspheme the Son of God. Our every day experience shows it. And in truth, what so natural? for mothers do not generally separate from their sons, and most sons feel aggrieved when their mothers are insulted. It would be strange, indeed, were it otherwise with Jesus and Mary. Hence it is, that in the Catholic Church alone is true homage paid to Mary: because there only, is the holy mystery of the Incarnation properly understood and appreciated. See, therefore, how good is devotion to the Blessed Virgin—so good, that it cannot be separated from devotion to Christ, or from a real belief in the great mystery of our Redemption. It is well known, too, that according as a man has belief in the intercessory power of the Blessed Virgin, and is imbued with a devotion to her, so is he Catholic and Catholic-minded. As, in a certain sense, consequently, devotion to

Our Lady is essential to a Catholic, as in fact there is no Catholicity without her, we have pretty plain evidence of what ground the Church stands upon when she inculcates a deep reverence and love to Mary. But, not only is this devotion innocuous as regards our duty to God, not only does it help wonderfully to glorify Him; but it is a source of much benefit and advantage to man besides.

All Catholics believe that it is good to pray to Our Lady, and invoke her intercession. They are not Catholics, but Protestants, if they do not. We believe, therefore, that Mary both *can* and *will* assist us. She can: because as St. Alphonsus says, Mary is all-powerful—God by nature being omnipotent, Mary by grace: that is to say, she obtains whatever she asks, in virtue of her great titles to the highest favour with God, namely, her unequalled purity and holiness, and her dignity as the Mother of God. When Mary prays, she prays not as a simple saint, but as the Queen of Heaven; and if “the continual prayer of a just man avail-eth much,”* what effect can we suppose too powerful for the prayer of her who is not a martyr, but the Queen of Martyrs, not a virgin, but the Queen of Virgins, not

* St. James, vi. 16.

a saint, but the Queen of Saints? And if sons will listen to the voice of a mother, when all else fails, are we to imagine that Mary's Son will turn a deaf ear to her petition? God forbid! He heard her on earth, He obeyed her on earth, and that obedience and filial love is in a manner strengthened rather than lessened, now that both have ascended to heaven. Mary can help us, therefore. And she will help us too. In order to prove this, long research is unnecessary. The Holy Scriptures evince it, the Fathers and the Church have never ceased to proclaim it, and the chronicles of Catholicity contain certain evidence at every page, of the love of the Blessed Virgin for mankind, and of the wonderful ways in which she has ever been ready to come to their assistance. Oh, how many thousands, and millions perhaps, are now in heaven by the prayers of Mary! how many countless numbers more are in purgatory, who but for her would be in hell! and who can count the legions and hosts of good Christians, who owe their conversion to her, their perseverance to her, every spiritual blessing—and, perhaps, worldly benefits too—grace and protection, to her all-powerful intercession? On the other hand, how many are lost, are now losing themselves, and will be lost, because, through false shame,

disbelief, culpable ignorance, or neglect, they have not secured the prayers of Mary !

Oh, have we not ample reason to be devout to Our Blessed Lady? Without such devotion, we may be lost. But we are sure to be saved, if we cultivate it: for Mary never allows her servants to lose their souls. We should be careful, however, to regulate well this devotion. An ill-regulated devotion is next door to none at all. And unhappily those who are but imperfectly instructed, or just turned to God, very often fall into this error. No sooner do they see the beauty of the Catholic spirit, than, but without consideration, they run headlong into the midst of everything. Now, if they will, this is one kind of devotion: but it is not true devotion. It is that devotion which, mushroom-like, having grown in a night, is soon trodden under foot or destroyed. It is the devotion which comes to-day and goes to-morrow—the devotion which began in conceit and private judgment, and ends in pride and a fall. All this must be carefully avoided, for it is not a genuine devotion. True and real devotion to Our Blessed Lady, like every other devotion, does not come in a day, nor in a week, and with some not for years. We must lay a good foundation first, namely, humility: we must read, and inform our-

selves: we must ask instruction and advice, and seek good direction when necessary, that thus we may stand clear of singularity, and avoid the rock of spiritual pride. This is the way to work up our devotion, this the way to water and garden the mustard seed of our faith in Mary, and this is the way to save ourselves through her holy intercession.

And now, as we finish, let us turn heartfully to Mary, and offer our thanks for all she has done for us during this good month of hers! We cannot have made the various meditations, without much good accruing to us: and who, doubtless, has helped us to it, but Mary our Mother? Let us thank her. But the best thanks we can give, is the promise of our confidence in her, that for the future we will trust in her, and pray to her often for grace to persevere in our good resolutions. "O Blessed Virgin Mary," let us say, "when we are bowed down with bad health and disease, we will pray to thee: for thou art the Health of the Weak. When we have much to support by contradictions, or the evil conduct of those about us, we will have recourse to thee—with thee shall we find comfort, and the gift of patience: for thou art the most patient of Mothers. When poor or in misery, when we scarcely know where to turn, that we

may eat and drink and provide for our families, we will send up our prayer to thee: for thou art the Help of Christians. Parents who grieve at their wilful children—wives who, forlorn and sad, weep as they think of their faithless husbands—friends of the absent ones—priests for their flocks—all for each other we will gather ourselves to thy throne in heaven. And does remorse for the past overwhelm us, and relapse into sin dismay us, oh, then again shall we call on thee: for Mary, thou art truly the Refuge of Sinners.”

VISIT TO A SANCTUARY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

The Sanctuary of Loretto shall be the object to-day of our spiritual pilgrimage to Mary. And most appropriately: for the chief centre of religious attraction at Loretto, is the holy house of Nazareth. Having begun our month with a visit to Bethlehem, what more natural than to end it in Nazareth? Most of us have heard of the ancient tradition, by which it is believed that the house inhabited by Our Lord at Nazareth, with His Mother and St. Joseph, has been miraculously translated, for some wise purpose ordained by God, first from Palestine into Dalmatia, in the year 1291, and afterwards from Dalmatia into Italy. It would

be impossible to make any statement here, with reference to the irresistible proofs by which we are made sure of this fact: suffice to say, that in consequence of the universally-received tradition, the town of Loretto has been a place of pilgrimage for the last five centuries and more, and volumes would not be enough to recount the list of devout visitors—saints, popes, and crowned heads, who have travelled from far and wide to Our Lady of Loretto. The devotion and pilgrimage are as vigorous as ever at the present day. Loretto is a small town, but well worth seeing in itself on account of the numerous ecclesiastical and charitable edifices which abound there. It is the seat of a bishopric, and a prelate delegate of the Holy See resides there also, with the title of Commissary Apostolic of the Holy House. The holy house stands inside a beautiful church built around it, which is in the form of a Greek cross, with two aisles and eighteen chapels. The holy house is under the dome; and it is covered outside with a magnificent casing, supported by twelve pillars of Carrara marble. The richness and vast quantities of votive offerings surpass conception. Within the holy house there are more than fifty lamps, gold and silver, always burning—and as many more in the church itself, besides a large treasury

of gifts. Here the well-known Litany of Loretto was composed and first sung, and for ages Loretto has been without doubt the first Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin in the world. What a glorious closing of the Month of Mary, is taking place at this moment in Loretto ! Let us travel thither in spirit, and whilst under the shelter of the holy house of Nazareth we thank Our Blessed Lady for all she has done for us, and beg grace for the future, remembering the lessons which that blessed spot has taught us, let us magnify the Lord for His mercies in giving us such a Mother, and thank Him for the glory, which He Himself has derived from this the most perfect of all His creatures.

PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES.

O Blessed Virgin, dear mistress of mine, I salute thee, and revere thee with all my heart. Mother of Mercy, pray for me. Queen of Heaven, I commend my soul to thee. O my tender Mother, obtain that I may be loved by thy Son. Sweet hope with Jesus, sweet refuge of sinners, I throw myself at thy feet. Cause me to experience the effect of the power which thou dost possess with the Holy Trinity, O glorious Virgin Mary ! Amen,

APPENDIX.

The Plaint of Our Lady.

HEAR me, all good Christian souls,
 Passing by the way,
 When did ever woman grieve
 Like unto me :
 See me how I weep and mourn,
 How my mother's heart is torn,
 Whene'er I think of my first-born,
 Jesus my Son.

When amid the winter snows,
 At the midnight hour,
 In the stall of Bethlehem,
 Jesus I bore,
 God alone could truly know
 How my troubled soul would flow
 With grief to see mine infant's woe,
 Jesus my Son.

What a load of anxious thoughts
 On my heart did lay,
 As I watched my gentle child
 Day after day,
 Living poor at Nazareth,
 Suffering to His last drawn breath,
 His passion and His cruel death,
 Jesus my Son.

When I saw His bitter wounds,
 In their sad array,
Him I loved so tenderly
 Passing away,
How I tossed upon a sea
Of unceasing misery :
For what was all the world to me,
 Jesus my Son.

When at last this anguish deep
 Had in part gone by,
Stern strokes were yet to come,
 'Ere I could die.
Evil deeds that men would do,
Guilt and crimes that must ensue,
All this I saw with steadfast view,
 Jesus my Son.

Oh, what sorrow rent my heart
 None can ever say,
When in thought I viewed the world,
 Far, far away :
Sins of pride and blasphemy,
Sins against sweet purity,
In hideous forms disclosed to me,
 Jesus my Son.

Hear me, all good Christian souls
 Passing by the way,
Saw ye ever mother grieve
 Like unto me :
Wicked men my heart would break,
Still to heaven one prayer I make,
Oh spare them for Thy mother's sake,
 Jesus my Son.

Hymn to Mary.

I'LL sing a hymn to Mary,
The Mother of my God,
The Virgin of all virgins,
Of David's royal blood.
O teach me, holy Mary,
A loving song to frame,
When wicked men blaspheme thee,
To love and bless thy name.

O Lily of the valley,
O Mystic Rose, what tree
Or flower, e'en the fairest,
Is half so fair as thee :
O' let me, though so lowly,
Recite my Mother's fame,
When wicked men blaspheme thee,
I'll love and bless thy name.

O noble tower of David,
Of gold and ivory,
The Ark of God's own promise,
The Gate of Heav'n to me :
To live, and not to love thee,
Would fill my soul with shame :
When wicked men blaspheme thee,
I'll love and bless thy name.

When troubles dark afflict me,
In sorrow and in care,
Thy light doth ever guide me,
O beauteous Morning star :
So I'll be ever ready,
Thy goodly help to claim,
When wicked men blaspheme thee,
To love and bless thy name.

The saints are high in glory,
With golden crowns so bright :
But brighter far is Mary,
Upon her throne of light.
O that which God did give thee,
Let mortal ne'er disclaim,
When wicked men blaspheme thee,
I'll love and bless thy name.

But in the crown of Mary,
There lies a wondrous gem,
As Queen of all the Angels,
Which Mary shares with them.
"No sin hath e'er defiled thee,"
So doth our faith proclaim,
When wicked men blaspheme thee,
I'll love and bless thy name.

And now, O Virgin Mary,
My Mother and my Queen,
I've sung thy praise—so bless me,
And keep my heart from sin :
When others jeer and mock thee,
I'll often think how I,
To shield my Mother Mary,
Would lay me down and die.

Ave Maria.

Ave Maria,
O Star of the sea,
Virgin and Mother,
The Lord is with thee.

The Gate which was closed,
Is open and free,
Ave Maria,
All honour to thee.

Ave Maria,
O light of our day,
Help us to banish
All evils away.
Be thou a Mother
To tend us, and we,
Ave Maria,
Will look up to thee

Ave Maria,
So gentle and pure,
Through this life's journey
O guardian secure:
Pray that in heaven
Our portion may be,
Ave Maria,
With Jesus and theo

Hymn of the Annunciation.

WHAT mortal tongue can sing thy praise,
Dear mother of the Lord :
To angels only it belongs,
Thy glory to record.

Say, Mary, what sweet force was that
Which from the Father's breast,
Drew forth His co-eternal Son,
To be thy bosom's guest?

'Twas not thy guileless faith alone
That lifted thee so high :

'Twas not thy pure seraphic love,
Or peerless chastity.

But oh ! it was thy lowliness,
Well pleasing to the Lord,
That made thee worthy to become
The mother of the Word.

O loftiest, whose humility
So sweet it was to see,
That God, forgetful of Himself,
Abased Himself to thee.

Hail, Queen of Heaven.

HAIL, Queen of Heav'n, the ocean Star,
Guide of the wand'rer here below :
Thrown on life's surge, we claim thy care,
Save us from peril and from woe.
Mother of Christ, Star of the sea,
Pray for the wanderer, pray for me.

O gentle, chaste, and spotless Maid,
We sinners make our prayers through thee,
Remind thy Son that He has paid
The price of our iniquity.
Virgin most pure, Star of the sea,
Pray for the sinner, pray for me

Sojourners in this vale of tears,
To thee, blest Advocate, we cry,
Pity our sorrows, calm our fears,
And soothe with hope our misery.
Refuge in grief, Star of the sea,
Pray for the mourner, pray for me.

And while to Him who reigns above,
 In Godhead One, in Persons Three,
 The source of life, of grace, of love,
 Homage we pay on bended knee;
 Do thou, bright Queen, Star of the sea,
 Pray for thy children, pray for me.

Tota pulchra es, Maria.

V. Tota pulchra es,
 Maria.

R. Tota pulchra es,
 Maria.

V. Et macula originalis
 non est in te.

R. Et macula originalis
 non est in te.

V. Tu gloria Jerusa-
 lem.

R. Tu lætitia Israel.

V. Tu honorificentia
 populi nostri.

R. Tu advocata pecca-
 torum.

V. O Maria.

R. O Maria.

V. Virgo prudentis-
 sima.

R. Mater clementis-
 sima.

V. Ora pro nobis.

R. Intercede pro nobis
 ad Dominum Jesum
 Christum.

V. In Conceptione tua,
 Virgo, immaculata fristi.
 (Alleluia in Paschal time.)

V. Thou art all beauti-
 ful, O Mary.

R. Thou art all beauti-
 ful, O Mary.

V. And original sin is
 not in thee.

R. And original sin is
 not in thee.

V. Thou art the glory
 of Jerusalem.

R. Thou art the joy of
 Israel.

V. Thou art the special
 honour of our people.

R. Thou art the advo-
 cate of sinners.

V. O Mary.

R. O Mary.

V. Virgin most pru-
 dent.

R. Mother most cle-
 ment.

V. Pray for us.

R. Intercede for us
 with Jesus Christ Our
 Lord.

V. In thy Conception,
 O Virgin, thou wert with-
 out sin.

R. Ora pro nobis Patrem, cujus Filiam peperisti. (Alleluia in *Paschal time*.)

Oremus.

Deus, qui per immaculatam Virginis Conceptionem dignum Filio tuo habitaculum præparasti, ejus nobis intercessionem concede, ut cor et corpus nostrum immaculatum Tibi, qui eam ab omni labe præservasti fideliter custodiamus. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

R. Pray for us to the Father, Whose Son thou didst bring forth.

Let us pray.

O God, Who by the Virgin's immaculate conception didst prepare a worthy dwelling for Thy Son, grant us that through her intercession we may be enabled faithfully to keep our heart and body free from all sin for Thy sake, who didst preserve her from every stain. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Salve Regina.

SALVE Regina, mater misericordiæ! vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve! Ad te clamamus, gementes et flentes, in hac lacrymarum valle. Eia ergo advocata nostra, illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte. Et Jesum benedictum fructum ventris tui, nobis post hoc exilium ostende. O clemens, O pia, O dulcis virgo Maria.

HAIL, O Queen, thou mother of Mercy! our life, our sweetness, and our hope, all hail! To thee do we cry, poor exiled children of Eve. To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Oh do thou, who art our advocate, turn those thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O merciful, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Ora pro nobis sancta Dei genitrix. (Alleluia in Paschal time.)

R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi. (Alleluia in Paschal time.)

Oremus.

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui gloriosæ Virginis Matris Mariæ corpus et animam, ut dignum Filii tui habitaculum effici mereretur, Spiritu Sancto cooperante, præparasti: da, ut cujus commemoratione lætatur, ejus pia intercessione ab instantibus malis et a morte perpetua liberemur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

O Almighty and eternal God, Who by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, didst prepare the body and soul of the glorious Virgin Mother Mary, that she might become a worthy habitation for thy Son: grant that, as with joy we celebrate her memory, so by her merciful intercession we may be delivered from present evils, and from eternal death. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Ave Maris Stella.

AVE maris stella,
Dei Mater alma,
Atque semper virgo,
Felix cœli porta.

Sumens illud Ave,
Gabrielis ore,
Funda nos in pace,
Mutans Evæ nomen.

HAIL, thou star of the sea,
thou who art the most pure
Mother of God, we salute
thee; O ever virgin, who
art to us the blessed gate
of heaven.

Whilst thou dost reverse
for us the curse of Eve, do
thou, we pray thee, receive
from the Angel Gabriel the
word of peace, which shall
not pass away.

Solve vincla reis,
Profer lumen cæcis,
Mala nostra pelle,
Bona cuncta posce.

Monstra te esse matrem,
Sumat per te preces,
Qui pro nobis natus,
Tulit esse tuus.

Virgo singularis,
Inter omnes mitis,
Nos culpis solutos,
Mites fac et castos

Vitam præsta puram,
Iter para tutum,
Ut videntes Jesum,
Semper collætémur.

Sit laus Deo Patri.
Summo Christo decus,
Spiritui Sancto,
Tribus honor unus.

Amen.

V. Dignare me laudare
te, Virgo sacrata, (Alleluia
in *Paschal* time.)

R. Da mihi virtutem
contra hostes tuos. (Alle-
luia in *Paschal* time.)

Oremus.

Gratiam tuam, quæsumus
Domine, mentibus
nostris infunde, ut qui
Angelo nuntiante Christi

Break thou the chains,
which bind the sinner:
Give light unto the blind:
Drive far from us all evil:
And pray to God for every
grace and blessing.

Show that thou art our
mother: may He Who
when He became man,
did not refuse thy mater-
nal care—now receive thy
prayers.

O thou Virgin of all vir-
gins, who art the gentlest
among the gentle, when we
have become cleansed
from sin, do thou obtain
for us the gift of purity
and gentleness.

Conduct us safely and
without sin, through the
journey of this life, that
one day we may behold
the face of Jesus, and re-
joice for evermore.

Praise and glory be un-
to God the Father, Son,
and Holy Ghost: with one
voice, praise ye the undi-
vided Trinity. Amen.

V. Do thou graciously
suffer me to praise thee, O
sacred Virgin.

R. Grant me strength
against thine enemies.

Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech
Thee, O Lord, Thy grace
into our hearts, that we to
whom the Incarnation of

Filii tui Incarnationem cognovimus, per passionem ejus et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

Christ Thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

Ant. SUB tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix, nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

Kyrie eleison.
Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.
Kyrie eleison.
Christe audi nos.
Christe exaudi nos.
Pater de cœlis Deus, miserere nobis.
Fili Redemptor mundi Deus, miserere nobis.

Spiritus Sancte Deus, miserere nobis.
Sancta Trinitas, unus Deus, miserere nobis.
Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.

Ant. WE fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities; but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and Blessed Virgin.

Lord, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ hear us.
Christ graciously hear us.
God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.
Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.
Holy Mary, Pray for us.

Sancta Dei Genitrix,
 Sancta Virgo Virginum,
 Mater Christi,
 Mater divinæ gratiæ,
 Mater purissima,
 Mater castissima,
 Mater inviolata,
 Mater intemerata,
 Mater amabilis,
 Mater admirabilis,
 Mater Creatoris,
 Mater Salvatoris,

Virgo prudentissima,
 Virgo veneranda,
 Virgo prædicanda,
 Virgo potens,
 Virgo clemens,
 Virgo fidelis,
 Speculum justitiæ,
 Sedes Sapientiæ,
 Causa nostræ lætitiæ,
 Vas Spirituale,
 Vas honorabile,
 Vas insigne devotionis,

Rosa mystica,
 Turris Davidica,
 Turris eburnea,
 Domus aurea,
 Fœderis arca,
 Janua Cœli,
 Stella matutina,
 Salus infirmorum,
 Refugium peccatorum,
 Consolatrix afflictorum.

Auxilium Christiano-
 rum,
 Regina angelorum,
 Regina patriarcharum,

Holy Mother of God,
 Holy Virgin of virgins,
 Mother of Christ,
 Mother of divine grace,
 Mother most pure,
 Mother most chaste,
 Mother inviolate,
 Mother undetiled,
 Mother most amiable,
 Mother most admirable,
 Mother of our Creator,
 Mother of our Redeem-
 er,

Virgin most prudent,
 Virgin most venerable,
 Virgin most renowned,
 Virgin most powerful,
 Virgin most merciful,
 Virgin most faithful,
 Mirror of justice,
 Seat of Wisdom,
 Cause of our joy,
 Spiritual vessel,
 Vessel of honour,
 Vessel of singular devo-
 tion,

Mystical rose,
 Tower of David,
 Tower of ivory,
 House of gold,
 Ark of the covenant,
 Gate of heaven,
 Morning star,
 Health of the weak,
 Refuge of sinners,
 Comforter of the afflict-
 ed,
 Help of Christians,

Queen of angels,
 Queen of patriarchs,

Ora pro nobis.

Pray for us.

Regina prophetarum,
 Regina apostolorum,
 Regina martyrum,
 Regina confessorum,
 Regina virginum,
 Regina sanctorum omnium,
 Regina sine labe originali concepta,

Ora pro nobis.

Queen of prophets,
 Queen of apostles,
 Queen of martyrs,
 Queen of confessors,
 Queen of virgins,
 Queen of all saints,

Pray for us.

Queen conceived without
 the stain of original sin,

Agnus Dei, qui tollis
 peccata mundi, parce nobis Domine.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis
 peccata mundi, exaudi nos Domine.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis
 peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Ant. Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei Genitrix, nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, Spare us O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, graciously hear us O Lord.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Ant. We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God, despise not our petitions in our necessities: but deliver us from all dangers, O ever glorious and Blessed Virgin,

The Rosary

OF

THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

THE FIVE JOYFUL MYSTERIES.

I. *The Annunciation*

Let us contemplate in this mystery, how the angel Gabriel saluted Our Blessed Lady

with the title, "Full of grace," and declared unto her the Incarnation of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our Father. Ten Hail Marys. Glory be, &c.

II *The Visitation*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how the Blessed Virgin Mary, understanding from the angel that her cousin St. Elizabeth had conceived, went with haste into the mountains of Judea to visit her, bearing her Divine Son within her womb, and remained with her three months

Our Father, &c.

III. *The Birth of Our Saviour Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how the Blessed Virgin Mary, when the time of her delivery was come, brought forth Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, at midnight, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inns at Bethlehem.

Our Father, &c.

IV. *The Presentation of Our Blessed Lord in the Temple.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how the Blessed Virgin Mary, on the day of her purification, presented the child Jesus in the Temple, where holy Simeon, giving thanks to God, with great devotion, received Him into his arms.

Our Father, &c.

V. *The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how the Blessed Virgin Mary, after having lost [through no fault of hers] her beloved Son in Jerusalem, sought Him for the space of three days; and at length found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions, being of the age of twelve years.

Our Father, &c.

Salve Regina, as at p. 330, with *V.* and *R.*, and the following *prayer*:

O glorious Queen of all the heavenly host, we beseech thee to accept this rosary, which, as a crown of roses, we offer at thy feet; and grant, most gracious lady, that, by thine intercession, our souls may be inflamed with such an ardent desire of seeing thee so gloriously crowned, that it may never die within us, until it shall be changed into the happy fruition of thy blessed sight. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE FIVE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES.

I. *The Prayer and Bloody Sweat of Our Blessed Saviour in the Garden.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how Our Lord Jesus Christ was so afflicted for us in the Garden of Gethsemane, that His body was bathed in a bloody sweat, which ran down in great drops to the ground

Our Father, &c

II. *The Scourging of Our Blessed Lord at the Pillar.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how Our Lord Jesus Christ was most cruelly scourged in Pilate's house, the number of stripes they gave Him being about five thousand.

Our Father, &c.

III. *The Crowning of Our Blessed Saviour with Thorns.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how those cruel ministers of Satan plaited a crown of sharp thorns, and cruelly pressed it on the sacred head of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Father, &c.

IV. *Jesus Carrying His Cross*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how Our Lord Jesus Christ, being sentenced to die, bore, with the most amazing patience, the cross which was laid upon Him for His greater torment and ignominy.

Our Father, &c.

V. *The Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how Our Lord Jesus Christ, being come to Mount Calvary, was stripped of His clothes, and His hands and feet nailed to the cross, in the presence of His most afflicted Mother.

Our Father, &c.

Salve Regina, and Prayer as before, p. 330.

THE FIVE GLORIOUS MYSTERIES.

I. *The Resurrection of Our Lord from the Dead.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how Our Lord Jesus Christ, triumphing gloriously over death, rose again the third day, immortal and impassible.

Our Father, &c.

II. *The Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how Our Lord Jesus Christ, forty days after His resurrection, ascended into heaven, attended by angels, in the sight, and to the great admiration, of His most holy Mother, and His holy apostles and disciples.

Our Father, &c.

III. *The Descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how Our Lord Jesus Christ, being seated on the right hand of God, sent, as He had promised, the Holy Ghost upon His Apostles, who, after He was ascended returning to Jerusalem, continued in prayer and supplication, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, expecting the performance of His promise.

Our Father, &c.

IV. *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how the glorious Virgin Mary, twelve years after the resurrection of her Son, passed out of

this world unto Him, and was by Him assumed into heaven accompanied by the holy Angels.

Our Father, &c.

V. *The Crowning of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in Heaven.*

Let us contemplate, in this mystery, how the glorious Virgin Mary, to the great jubilee and exultation of the whole court of heaven, and the particular glory of all the Saints, was crowned by her Son with the brightest diadem of glory.

Our Father, &c.

Salve Regina, and Prayer as before, p. 33C.

The Angelus.

This prayer is said, morning, noon, and night, in all Catholic countries.

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Hail Mary, full of grace, &c.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace, &c.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, &c.

Let us pray.

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the

Incarnation of Christ thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His passion and cross, be brought to the glory of His resurrection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, &c. *three times*.

Fifteen Practices of Devotion

IN HONOUR OF

THE BLESSED MOTHER OF GOD.

1. To say every day the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

2. To say every day the whole or part of the Rosary.

3. To say often the Rosary of the Seven Dolours.

4. To enrol one's self in one or other of the Confraternities especially dedicated to Our Lady.

5. To fast on Saturdays, or abstain on Wednesdays and Fridays in honour of Our Lady.

6. Frequently to invoke Our Lady's patronage, in time of trouble or temptation.

7. To observe the Month of Mary and the festivals of the B. Virgin, by hearing Mass, and by approaching the Sacraments on such occasions.

8. To recite, when possible, the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, or the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception.

9. To wear the Brown Scapular of Mount Carmel, or that of the Immaculate Conception.

10. To wear about the Person, medals, rings, or images in memory of Our Lady, such as those of Loretto or La Salette, or that known as the miraculous medal.

11. To cause children to be offered up, at an early age, by a priest, on the altar of Our Lady.

12. To enrol one's self when young, or to cause others to be enroled, as a child of Mary—*enfant de Marie*

13. To follow, when possible, the good practice adopted in Catholic countries, of wearing a particular colour of dress, for a particular period of time, such as that worn in France in honour of the Blessed Virgin by the "*vouées au blanc*" or the "*vouées au bleu*."

14. To recite the Angelus regularly every-day at the appointed hours.

15. To praise everything the Church sanctions in regard of devotions to Our Blessed Lady, to promote them in every possible way, and to try to induce others to have the same feelings.

(The above practices are of course noways of obligation, either collectively or singly. They are given here as an index of that which is allowed by holy Church, and of what is therefore right. To avoid confusion however, and to render the matter more practicable, it is recommended to choose one, two, or a few practices rather than many, which might overburden the mind and engender scruples instead of piety.)

Laus semper Deo omnipotenti,
et
Filio ejus Unigenito Domino nostro ;
Necnon et
Beatissimæ semper Virgini Mariæ,
Immaculatæ, Reginae Cæli,
et
Matri Nostræ.

The End.

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